

DISCOURSE AND AUTHORITY IN THE TREATMENT OF *ISRĀ'ĪLIYYĀT*

A Critical Analysis of Ibn Kašīr and the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs' Exegesis of Qur'an 7: 157

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Abstract

This article examines the construction of discursive authority in addressing *isrā'īliyyāt* through a comparative analysis of the interpretation of *surah Al-A'rāf* (7): 157 in Ibn Kašīr's *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm* and *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsīrnya* by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. Employing Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, this study critiques classical conceptions of exegetical authority that rely primarily on *sanad*-based transmission. The findings reveal that Ibn Kašīr constructs authority through a rigorous *tafsīr bil-ma'sūr* methodology by filtering *isrā'īliyyāt* according to their conformity with the Qur'an, hadith, and the reliability of the chain of transmission. In contrast, the Ministry's tafsir establishes authority through a *tahlīliyy ijtimā'iy* approach that contextualizes Qur'anic meaning within Indonesia's social realities and Pancasila values. Thus, exegetical authority is understood as a dynamic construction shaped by the interaction of scholarly principles, socio-historical contexts, and ideological interests.

Keywords: *Isrā'īliyyāt*, authority, Ibn Kašīr's Exegesis, The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs' Exegesis, *surah Al-A'rāf* (7): 157.

Diskursus dan Otoritas dalam Penggunaan Isrā'īlyyāt: Analisis Kritis atas Penafsiran Ibn Kaṣīr dan Tafsīr Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia terhadap Surah Al-A'rāf (7): 157

Abstrak

Artikel ini menganalisis konstruksi otoritas wacana dalam penyikapan terhadap isrā'īlyyāt melalui perbandingan penafsiran surah Al-A'rāf (7) :157 dalam Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm karya Ibn Kaṣīr dan Al-Qur'an dan Tafsīrnya karya Kementerian Agama RI. Dengan menggunakan Analisis Wacana Kritis Norman Fairclough, penelitian ini mengkritik konsep otoritas tafsir klasik yang hanya bertumpu pada transmisi sanad. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa Ibn Kaṣīr membangun otoritas melalui metode tafsīr bil-ma'sūr yang ketat, dengan menyaring isrā'īlyyāt berdasarkan kesesuaiannya dengan Al-Qur'an, hadis, dan kekuatan sanad. Sementara itu, Kementerian Agama membangun otoritas melalui pendekatan tahlīly ijtimā'iy yang menyesuaikan makna ayat dengan konteks sosial Indonesia serta nilai Pancasila. Dengan demikian, otoritas tafsir dipahami sebagai konstruksi dinamis yang lahir dari interaksi antara prinsip keilmuan, konteks sosial-historis, dan kepentingan ideologis.

Kata Kunci: *Isrā'īlyyāt, Otoritas, Tafsīr Ibn Kaṣīr, Tafsīr Kementerian Agama, surah Al-A'rāf (7): 157.*

Introduction

The discourse surrounding the permissibility of transmitting *isrāʿīlyyāt* (narratives sourced from Judeo-Christian traditions) within early Islamic exegesis was characterized by theological ambivalence. This is evidenced by contradictory prophetic traditions (*aḥādīṣ*), ranging from cautious neutrality (Al-Bukhāriy n.d., IV/374) to explicit prohibitions against consulting the Ahl al-Kitāb (Ibn Ḥanbal 1420 H., XXII/468), contrasted with other reports that permitted such transmission (Al-Bukhāriy n.d., II/493; Kister 1972, 217). This doctrinal tension was systematically addressed in the classical period by Ibn Kaṣīr (d. 774 AH.), who established a rigorous, tripartite framework for filtering these extraneous narratives based strictly on their conformity with the Qurʿan and Sunnah (Ibn Kaṣīr 1999, I/9). In the modern context, state-sponsored exegesis, such as Indonesia's *Al-Qurʿan dan Tafsirnya* produced by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has adopted a distinct *tahlīliyy ijtimāʿiy* (socio-analytical) approach. This methodology prioritizes the contextualization of scripture within Indonesia's pluralistic society and national ideology (Amnesti 2021; Umamik 2019). However, scholarly analysis reveals a significant gap: a dedicated comparative study examining how these two paradigmatic works—the classical *tafsīr bil-maʿsūr* and the modern institutional tafsir—construct discursive authority to manage *isrāʿīlyyāt*, particularly in interpreting verses that explicitly reference previous scriptures, remains absent (Irham, Sitorus, and Sahputra 2025; Bana and Kamil 2024). This study aims to fill that critical gap.

Extant scholarship on *isrāʿīlyyāt* has indeed flourished, encompassing historical analysis (Albayrak 2000; Halilović 2005), functional impact studies (Mainiyō and Abdullahi 2018; Rohmah and Mildasari 2022), and intertextual approaches (O'Connor 2024; Ahmed 2015). Furthermore, the methodological character of the modern Indonesian state tafsir has been elucidated (Amnesti 2021; Umamik 2019). Nonetheless, as noted, a critical lacuna persists: a comparative discursive analysis of authority construction between a classical canon like Ibn Kaṣīr's and a modern institutional work like the Indonesian Ministry's tafsir remains unaddressed.

This salient gap is examined through a focused case study: surah Al-A'rāf (7): 157. This verse, which explains the prophecy of the Prophet Muhammad *ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wasallam*, is inherently vulnerable to the inclusion of *isrāʿīlyyāt* due to its explicit reference to the Torah and Gospel. Such references are often leveraged to support the interpretative claim that the Prophet was foretold in the previous scriptures. Although this apologetic motivation is understandable, the practice risks compromising exegetical authenticity by introducing unverified narratives, thereby creating a tension between proving the divine origin of revelation and upholding the principle of cautious engagement with non-Islamic sources. This vulnerability invites different responses from exegetes working within varying frameworks of authority, as exemplified by the two works under examination in this study.

On the other hand, *Al-Qurʿan dan Tafsirnya*, published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, represents a contemporary institutional form of Qurʿanic exegesis that employs a *tahlīliyy ijtimāʿiy* (socio-analytical) approach. As a state-

sponsored tafsir, it occupies the intersection between scholarly tradition and national ideological commitments, reflecting institutional patterns of authority construction in modern Muslim societies (Avivy, et al. 2015; Shomad, et al. 2024). Unlike Ibn Kaşir's individually authored classical exegesis, the Ministry's tafsir derives its legitimacy not from scholarly lineage or *sanad*-based authority, but from an official institutional mandate to articulate a national Islamic orthodoxy compatible with Indonesia's pluralistic society. In interpreting surah Al-A'rāf (7): 157, this institutional position shapes its discursive engagement with *isrā'īlyyāt*, requiring a balance between traditional exegetical authenticity, interfaith harmony, and national cohesion. The comparative study of Ibn Kaşir and the Ministry's tafsir therefore addresses a gap in existing scholarship concerning how modern institutional exegesis constructs authority in relation to classical paradigms, despite growing attention to the institutional dimensions of religious authority (Sunier & Buskens 2022a). This comparison reveals how strategies for managing *isrā'īlyyāt* have evolved across historical and institutional contexts while also exposing continuities and discontinuities within the Qur'anic exegetical tradition.

Before examining the two tafsir works, authority in this study is understood as a legitimized claim to define orthodoxy within a discursive field (Sulaiman 2018). Discursive authority refers to the capacity to produce, regulate, and legitimize religious meaning through discourse, while religious authority derives its legitimacy from tradition, sacred texts, and socially recognized expertise (Cochrane & Adams 2018; Dreßler 2019; Alatas 2023). These concepts are interconnected through legitimation, boundary-making, and the negotiation of power (Martin 2009; Qadir 2016). In Qur'anic exegesis, authority is therefore not limited to the methodology or credentials of a *mufassir*, but also includes the capacity of exegetical discourse to be accepted as a representation of orthodox truth through scholarly legitimacy, institutional endorsement, or socio-ideological adaptability (El Shamsy 2008; Sunier & Buskens 2022b). Drawing on Foucault's power/knowledge framework, tafsir is viewed not as a neutral explanation of scripture, but as a productive discourse that constructs and regulates religious truth through the inclusion or exclusion of narratives such as *isrā'īlyyāt*. This perspective also aligns with Asad's concept of Islam as a discursive tradition, in which authority is continually negotiated across generations and contexts (Asad 1986, 2003). Thus, comparing Ibn Kaşir's classical tafsir with the Indonesian Ministry's modern institutional tafsir is methodologically strategic, as it demonstrates that religious authority is relational, dynamic, contested, and shaped by the interaction of textual interpretation, institutional power, and broader socio-political forces (Ichwan & Salisu 2024; Alatas 2023).

In the context of this complex dialectic of *isrā'īlyyāt*, two works of tafsir that represent different approaches to interpreting surah Al-A'rāf (7): 157 deserve to be the focus of study. *Tafsir Al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm* by Ibn Kaşir (d. 774 AH.) is a canonical representation of *tafsir bil-ma'sūr*, which applies a strict filter to *isrā'īlyyāt*. Ibn Kaşir establishes his interpretive authority through a strict adherence to the *tafsir bil-ma'sūr* methodology, which prioritizes the Qur'an, prophetic hadith, and the consensus of the

companions (*ṣaḥābah*) as the primary sources of legitimate meaning. This methodological rigor functions as a discursive filter that selectively incorporates or excludes *isrā'īlyyāt* narratives based on their compatibility with established Islamic sources and the strength of their chain of transmission (*sanad*). In interpreting surah Al-A'rāf (7): 157, this approach enables Ibn Kaṣīr to position his exegesis as authentically grounded in prophetic tradition while simultaneously containing the potential threat of unverified narratives from previous scriptures, thereby reinforcing his authority as a guardian of orthodox interpretation.

Given the distinct approaches of these two representative works, this study aims to explore two main questions. First, how is the interpretation of surah Al-A'rāf (7): 157 described in *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm* by Ibn Kaṣīr and *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsīrnya* by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia? Second, how do these two tafsir works, which represent different eras and paradigms, construct their respective discourses of authority in addressing and filtering the infiltration of *isrā'īlyyāt* in the interpretation of this verse? Through a comparison of these two works, this study aims to reveal the evolution of discursive strategies in managing interpretive legacies that are vulnerable to external influences, while also mapping the continuities and discontinuities in the tradition of Qur'anic interpretation.

To ensure a clear and measurable focus, this study is limited in three respects: first, its material objects are confined to two exegetical works, namely *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm* by Ibn Kaṣīr, which represents the classical *tafsīr bil-ma'sūr* paradigm, and *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsīrnya* by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, which represents contemporary official Indonesian Qur'anic interpretation; second, the analysis is restricted to the interpretation of surah Al-A'rāf (7): 157 as a crucial and representative case study, since the verse explicitly refers to the Torah and the Gospel and therefore provides a significant field for examining the discourse of authority concerning *isrā'īlyyāt*; and third, the study focuses specifically on the construction of authority and the discursive strategies used to filter *isrā'īlyyāt*, without attempting to comprehensively examine all methodological, theological, or social dimensions of the two tafsir works. These limitations are intended to maintain analytical depth while enabling a focused comparison between two exegetical traditions that differ in historical period, institutional context, and modes of authority.

Methodologically, this study applies Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework in a dialectical manner: at the textual level, it examines linguistic structures, argumentative patterns, and narrative choices in each tafsir's interpretation of surah Al-A'rāf (7): 157; at the level of discursive practice, it traces the production, reception, and intertextual relations of each exegetical work by situating them within their respective historical and institutional contexts; and at the level of social practice, it connects these findings to broader ideological structures and power relations, including the construction of Sunni orthodoxy, the discourse of religious moderation in contemporary Indonesia, and the negotiation of religious authority in postcolonial Muslim societies.

Through this multilayered approach, the study critically explains how discursive strategies for filtering *isrā'īlyyāt* and legitimizing interpretive authority are both shaped by and contribute to wider social and ideological dynamics. Overall, this research is expected not only to deepen understanding of the dialectic of *isrā'īlyyāt* in the interpretation of a crucial Qur'anic verse, but also to contribute to the study of exegetical methodology by mapping the evolution of discursive strategies in the construction of religious authority. By comparing classical and modern-institutional exegetical paradigms, this study offers an analytical lens for understanding how Qur'anic interpretive authority continues to be negotiated, constructed, and sustained in response to the intellectual legacy of earlier sacred traditions.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach by applying a comparative method and Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis model as the main analytical tool. This approach was chosen for its comprehensive ability to reveal not only the surface meaning of the text, but also the power relations, ideologies, and social interests inherent in the practice of interpretation. Fairclough views discourse as a form of social practice that cannot be separated from the historical and sociocultural context in which the text is produced and consumed (Fairclough 2001, 20). His three-dimensional framework—text, discursive practice, and social practice (Fairclough 1995, 97-100), offers the right tools to analyze in depth how interpretive authority is constructed and how the two interpretations studied respond to the *isrā'īlyyāt* narrative.

This study employs a diachronic comparative model to examine two exegetical works from distinct historical contexts—Ibn Kaşir's classical tafsir (8th/14th century) and the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs' contemporary tafsir. The comparison is structured around three parameters derived from the study's theoretical framework: legitimation (sources of authority: scholarly lineage vs. institutional mandate), hermeneutical engagement (criteria for including or rejecting *isrā'īlyyāt*), and ideological articulation (embedding of broader commitments: Sunni orthodoxy vs. religious moderation and Pancasila). These parameters are operationalized through a structured comparison applying Fairclough's three-dimensional framework consistently to both works, enabling systematic identification of continuities and discontinuities in the construction of interpretive authority.

Using Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis framework, this study examines the construction of authority in the interpretation of surah Al-A'rāf (7): 157 in *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-Azīm* by Ibn Kaşir and *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsīrnya* by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs. At the level of text analysis, the study investigates vocabulary choices, grammatical structures, and argumentative schemes to identify the experiential value of how prophetic reality is represented, the relational value of how the relationship between the interpreter, readers, and the *Ahl al-Kitāb* is constructed, and the expressive value of the interpreter's attitude toward *isrā'īlyyāt* sources (Fairclough 2001, 93–109).

At the level of discursive practice, the study traces the production, consumption, and intertextuality of both tafsir works by situating Ibn Kaṣīr's exegesis within the intellectual context of the eighth century AH and the *tafsīr bil-ma'sūr* tradition, while analyzing the Ministry's tafsir as a state-produced work compiled by a team of experts to support religious harmony in Indonesia (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 66-67), Fairclough's concept of intertextuality is employed to examine how both interpretations engage with hadith, earlier scholarly opinions, and the scriptures of the *Ahl al-Kitāb* in selecting, filtering, or rejecting elements of *isrāʿīlyyāt* (Fairclough 1992, 101-104) At the level of social practice, the analysis connects these textual and discursive findings to broader structures of power and ideology, particularly how Ibn Kaṣīr's tafsir reproduces or transforms Sunni orthodox authority and how the Ministry's tafsir constructs institutional authority through the discourse of religious moderation (Fairclough 2001, 31), Gramsci's concept of hegemony, as developed through Fairclough, is used to explain how both works seek consent through the negotiation of meaning regarding Qur'anic interpretive authority and *isrāʿīlyyāt* (Fairclough 1992, 92) Thus, this framework enables the study to move beyond a descriptive comparison of interpretations toward a critical explanation of the power-knowledge dynamics that shape continuity and discontinuity between classical and contemporary Qur'anic exegesis.

With this framework, the answer to the research question of how the discourse of authority is constructed will not stop at a description of differences in interpretation, but will lead to a critical explanation of the dynamics of power-knowledge that shape it, so that the continuity and discontinuity between classical and contemporary interpretations can be mapped more substantively.

The Concept of *Isrāʿīlyyāt*

The term *isrāʿīlyyāt* is commonly defined etymologically as narratives attributed to the Children of Israel (Banū Isrāʿīl), and terminologically expanded to include Judeo-Christian traditions as well as fabrications allegedly inserted to undermine Islamic beliefs (Aẓ-Ẓahabiy n.d., I/120; Abū Syahbah 1408 H., 13). However, from a critical discourse perspective, this definition is not merely a neutral taxonomic description but a discursive construct that emerged within specific historical power struggles over religious authority. The very act of categorizing certain narratives as *isrāʿīlyyāt*—and distinguishing them from authentic Islamic material—functions as a boundary-making mechanism that defines what counts as legitimate knowledge within the interpretive tradition (Sulaiman 2018; Qadir 2016). The dominance of Jewish characteristics in early classifications, for instance, cannot be separated from the socio-political dynamics of 7th-8th century Arabia, where Muslim communities were negotiating their identity vis-a-vis established Jewish and Christian groups (Aẓ-Ẓahabiy n.d., 15). Moreover, the systematization of *isrāʿīlyyāt* criticism by figures like Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Kaṣīr in the 8th/14th century (Ibn Taymiyyah 1972, 100; Ibn Kaṣīr 1999, I/9) represents not merely a methodological refinement, but a consolidation of discursive authority aimed at centralizing interpretive control within the emerging Sunni orthodoxy. Thus, rather

than treating *isrāʿīliyyāt* as a pre-existing category to be described, this study approaches it as a discursive site where authority is asserted, boundaries are policed, and orthodoxies are reproduced—or contested. This perspective aligns with the study's broader aim of examining how Ibn Kaşir and the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs construct their respective authorities through their treatment of these narratives.

To evaluate this material, scholars have developed a comprehensive classification system. The most influential classification was proposed by Ibn Kaşir, who divided it into three categories based on its conformity with Islamic law: (1) those that are appropriate and acceptable, (2) contradictory and must be rejected, and (3) neutral (*maskūt 'anhu*)—neither confirmed nor denied—so that it may be narrated for information purposes without being used as a basis for belief (Ibn Kaşir 1999, I/9). This classification is reinforced by the parameters of authenticity and theme (*Az-Żahabiy* n.d., 35-41), which allow for strict filtration, such as accepting authentic and compatible narrations (*Al-Bukhāriy* 1422 H., III/66) and rejecting weak and contradictory ones (Ibn Kaşir 1999, VII/394).

However, from a critical discourse perspective, this seemingly neutral tripartite classification is far from an objective taxonomic tool. Rather than merely describing narrative types, it functions as a discursive mechanism of boundary-making that actively produces and polices the limits of Islamic orthodoxy. As such, it embeds power relations that determine which knowledge is legitimized and which is marginalized (Sulaiman 2018; Qadir 2016). As contemporary scholarship has shown, the systematization of *isrāʿīliyyāt* criticism by figures like Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Kaşir in the 8th/14th century coincided with the consolidation of Sunni orthodoxy amidst intense politico-theological rivalries, suggesting that this classificatory framework was not merely a methodological refinement but a strategy for centralizing interpretive authority (Amer Meziane 2020; Çoruh 2022). The criteria of compatibility with the Qur'an and authentic hadith, while presented as neutral principles, inevitably privilege particular theological commitments and exclude alternative readings that might challenge established orthodoxy. Moreover, the epistemological assumptions underlying this classification—such as the sharp distinction between *qaṭ'iy* (definitive) and *ẓanniy* (speculative) texts—are themselves constructs that reflect specific power-knowledge configurations (Albayrak 2012). This observation resonates with broader critiques of Orientalist paradigms in Islamic studies, which have exposed how scholarly categories often mask ideological investments and power asymmetries (Amer Meziane 2020), and with comparative theological approaches that call for greater epistemological transparency in hermeneutical engagements with scriptural traditions (Albayrak 2012; Çoruh 2022).

The law of narrating *isrāʿīliyyāt* is constructed through a dialectical synthesis between seemingly contradictory arguments, between warnings against distortion (*tahrif*) in previous scriptures (*An-Nisā'*/ 4:46 and *Al-Mā'idah*/5:13) and the exhortation to caution on the one hand, with arguments that allow reference to the Ahl Kitab (*Yūnus*/10:94) and hadiths about the permissibility of narrating from the Children of

Israel (Al-Bukhāriy 1422 H., IV/170) on the other. The synthesis of the scholars resulted in a median position that set strict conditions: the material must not contradict the *qaṭʿiy* text, it must go through a valid chain of narration, and it must not be related to the final foundations of religion (*uṣūluddīn*) (Az-Žahabiy n.d., 49-50). Its function as a source of narration is in principle limited to *istisyhād* (supporting evidence or illustration), not *iʿtiqād* (foundation of belief), as emphasized by Ibn Taymiyyah (Ibn Taymiyyah 1972, 100).

Thus, rather than treating Ibn Kaṣīr’s framework as a transparent description of how to handle pre-Islamic narratives, this study approaches it as a discursive site where authority is asserted, boundaries are negotiated, and a particular vision of orthodoxy is reproduced. The concept of *isrāʾīliyyāt*, along with its classification framework and laws, does not merely reflect the epistemological depth of Islam in critically addressing the pre-Islamic intellectual heritage; it also reveals the power dynamics and ideological interests that shape what counts as legitimate knowledge within the interpretive tradition. This critical perspective aligns with the study’s broader aim of examining how both classical and modern tafsir construct their authority through the treatment of *isrāʾīliyyāt* in surah Al-Aʾrāf (7): 157.

Comparative Analysis of the Interpretation of Surah Al-Aʾrāf (7): 157

Textual Analysis: Linguistic Representation of Prophetic Prophecy

In terms of textual analysis, Ibn Kaṣīr’s interpretation of surah Al-Aʾrāf (7): 157 displays significant linguistic characteristics. Through precise lexical choices, Ibn Kaṣīr presents evidence of Muhammad’s prophethood based on the testimony of previous generations through relevant historical accounts.

From a grammatical perspective, the use of decisive declarative sentence patterns with minimal modality indicates definitive interpretive authority. Crucially, this minimal modality does not merely reflect confidence; it performs a specific ideological function: it presents Ibn Kaṣīr’s interpretation not as one possible reading among many, but as the self-evident truth of the text. The absence of hedging or tentative language forecloses the possibility of alternative interpretations, positioning the *mufasssīr* as a transparent conduit of divine meaning rather than an active agent of meaning-making. This discursive strategy naturalizes his authority by making it appear invisible—the interpretation seems to flow directly from the sources themselves, obscuring the interpretive labor and selectivity involved in its production.

The choice of active verbs such as “to permit (*yuḥillu*),” “to forbid (*yuḥarrimu*),” and “to remove burdens (*wa yaḍaʿu ʿanhum iṣraḥum wal-aglāl allatī kānat ʿalayhim*)” (Ibn Kaṣīr 1999, III/488) affirms Muhammad’s prophetic role as an agent of socio-religious transformation. These verb choices construct prophetic authority as inherently legislative and liberative, framing Muhammad’s mission in terms of legal power (*ḥalāl/ḥarām*) and social emancipation. This linguistic representation aligns with Ibn Kaṣīr’s broader project of positioning the Prophet within the lineage of Mosaic law-giving, thereby reinforcing the continuity between Islamic and previous prophetic traditions while simultaneously asserting Islam’s supersessionist completion of those

traditions. The active, transitive structure of these verbs (someone acts upon something) embeds a hierarchical relationship between the Prophet as agent and the community as recipient, naturalizing prophetic authority as benevolent intervention rather than inviting reflection on its construction.

Meanwhile, the narrative structure is built through the repetition of the Prophet's characteristics – “not harsh (*laysa bifazẓin wa lā galīẓ*),” “forgiving and pardoning (*ya'fū wa yasfaḥu*),” and “not shouting in the markets (*wa lā ṣakḥkhāibn fīs-sūq*)” (Ibn Kaṣīr 1999, III/486),¹ creates a consistent and easily internalized discursive framework that shapes the reader's perception of prophetic character. The aspect of textual cohesion is maintained through the close interweaving of verses with various supporting accounts. Each claim about prophetic revelations is immediately reinforced with evidence in the form of historical stories, such as the account of the Jewish youth who converted to Islam (ibn Ḥanbal 1420 H., XXXVIII/476) and the audience with Heraclius (Al-Baihaqiy 1985, I/386). This pattern creates a solid line of argument through a combination of *naqliy* arguments and historical contextualization. Importantly, this strategy of immediate reinforcement through narrative evidence performs a specific ideological function: it constructs prophetic authority as empirically verifiable through historical testimony, thereby grounding religious belief in seemingly objective historical facts rather than in faith alone. The cumulative effect is the naturalization of a particular interpretive framework where historical narratives serve as transparent windows into prophetic truth, obscuring the selectivity and interpretive labor involved in constructing these very narratives.

What is noteworthy is Ibn Kaṣīr's strategy in utilizing relational values through the selection of historical sources. By including authorities such as Abdullah ibn 'Amr and Ka'b al-Aḥbār (Ibn Kaṣīr 1999, III/476),² as well as historical accounts that have *sanad* and explain the quality of the *sanad*, he builds a relationship of trust with the reader while reinforcing the credibility of his interpretation. However, this selection is not innocent. By privileging sources with recognized chains of transmission, Ibn Kaṣīr enacts a specific regime of truth that legitimizes certain knowledge while implicitly delegitimizing others. The inclusion of figures who converted from Judaism, for instance, serves a double function: it draws upon their insider knowledge of previous scriptures while simultaneously demonstrating Islam's supersessionist triumph. More significantly, this strategy of source selection reproduces the authority of the *sanad* system itself—the very system within which Ibn Kaṣīr's own authority is embedded. By repeatedly demonstrating how proper methodology (relying on sound *sanad*) produces correct interpretation, the text performs a kind of methodological self-legitimation that reinforces the interpretive tradition's institutional authority.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Religious Affairs' interpretation of surah Al-A'raf (7): 157 displays linguistic characteristics that reflect the orientation of contemporary interpretation in Indonesia. Through modern and easy-to-understand lexical choices,

¹ As cited by Ibn Kaṣīr, quoting the narrations of aṭ-Ṭabariy and al-Bukhāriy.

² Narrated by aṭ-Ṭabariy and al-Bukhāriy from Aṭā' ibn Yassār.

this interpretation constructs a representation of Muhammad's prophethood that is relevant to the current context. In this interpretation, the term *ummī* is not only explained as illiteracy, but is developed into evidence of the authenticity of revelation independent of the influence of previous texts, with an emphasis on the miraculous nature of the Qur'an as divine revelation (Departemen Agama RI 2011, III/497).

The narrative structure built through the explanation of the five characteristics of the Prophet mentioned in this verse shows a systematic and educational discursive pattern. The use of numbering and categorization—ranging from prophetic attributes, prophecies in previous scriptures, to socio-religious functions—creates a structured framework of understanding for modern readers. This pedagogical mode of presentation, while seemingly neutral, performs important ideological work. By organizing prophetic attributes into clear, numbered categories, the text transforms complex theological concepts into manageable, bureaucratized knowledge—a discursive strategy that resonates with the Ministry's institutional position as a state educator of religious moderation. The implicit message is that proper religious understanding is orderly, systematic, and amenable to official categorization. This framing simultaneously marginalizes more ambiguous, contested, or mystical interpretations of prophetic authority that might resist such neat categorization. The educational clarity of the text thus functions as a mechanism of interpretive boundary-setting, defining not only what believers should know but also how they should know it—through structured, state-sanctioned categories rather than through alternative interpretive communities or methodologies.

Grammatically, the use of clear declarative sentences with minimal technical terminology reflects an orientation toward a general readership. The selection of transformative verbs such as “making lawful (*yuḥillu*),” “prohibiting (*yuḥarrimu*),” and “removing burdens (*wa yaḍa'u 'anhum iṣraḥum wal-aglāl allatī kānat 'alayhim*)” is framed within the discourse of social benefit (*maṣlahah*), accompanied by contextualized explanations relevant to Indonesian societal realities. For instance, the interpretation of “burdens and shackles (*iṣraḥum wal-aglāl*)” extends beyond a purely theological reading to encompass liberation from social and psychological constraints (Departemen Agama RI 2011, III/499). Crucially, this framing of prophetic authority within the discourse of social benefit (*maṣlahah*) performs important ideological work. By linking the Prophet's legislative role to concrete social outcomes—such as communal welfare and individual well-being—the text constructs religious authority as inherently pragmatic and socially beneficial rather than merely doctrinal. This discursive strategy resonates with the Ministry's broader institutional project of promoting a version of Islam that is compatible with modern nation-state governance, where religious authority is legitimized not only through textual fidelity but through its demonstrated contribution to social cohesion. The interpretation thus positions the state as the proper mediator of prophetic values for contemporary Indonesian society.

Textual cohesion is maintained through the close integration of verse exegesis with contemporary contexts. Each prophetic characteristic is supplemented with practical illustrations; for example, the concepts of *ma'rūf* (good) and *munkar* (evil) are linked to

universal human values and communal welfare (Departemen Agama RI 2011, III/499). This pattern underscores the *taḥlīlīy ijtimā'iy* (analytical-social) approach that defines this commentary.

Noteworthy is the textual strategy adopted in addressing prophecies found in earlier scriptures. By incorporating specific references from the Old and New Testaments—such as the books of Genesis, Deuteronomy, and John—the commentary constructs a scholarly yet accessible argument. The mention of the term Periclytos and its philological correspondence with Aḥmad (Departemen Agama RI 2011, III/497-499) illustrates a depth of research that does not compromise communicative clarity. However, this seemingly neutral scholarly demonstration conceals a more complex discursive move. By presenting the Periclytos-Aḥmad correspondence as established philological fact rather than contested interpretation, the text performs a kind of epistemic closure—it transforms a hermeneutical claim (that the Greek term can be read as referring to Muhammad) into a self-evident truth. This strategy forecloses alternative understandings of biblical prophecy and positions the Qur'anic interpretation as the master key to deciphering previous scriptures. More significantly, by demonstrating scholarly mastery of biblical texts, the Indonesian state tafsir positions itself as an authoritative interlocutor in interfaith discourse, capable of engaging with Christian traditions on their own textual terms while simultaneously asserting Islamic supersessionism. The text thus enacts a form of discursive authority that is both scholarly and institutional, claiming the right to define not only Islamic orthodoxy but also the proper interpretation of other religious traditions.

Through this textual analysis, it becomes evident how both tafsir works construct their interpretive authority through distinct discursive strategies in engaging with *isrā'īlyyāt*. Ibn Kaṣīr's meticulous selection of sources with authentic chains of transmission functions as a filtering mechanism that systematically excludes unverified *isrā'īlyyāt* narratives while incorporating those that align with his methodological commitment to *tafsīr bil-ma'sūr*. This discursive strategy normalizes a particular regime of truth where authority flows through recognized scholarly lineage, positioning Ibn Kaṣīr as a guardian of orthodox interpretation who safeguards the tradition from corrupting external influences.

By contrast, *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsīrnya* by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs adopts a markedly different approach. Its inclusion of specific biblical references—such as the Periclytos-Aḥmad correspondence—represents a reconstruction of how previous scriptures are engaged, transforming *isrā'īlyyāt* from potentially suspect narratives into resources for interfaith dialogue and national cohesion. This strategy does not simply filter or exclude; it reframes the very category of *isrā'īlyyāt*, repositioning these narratives within a discourse of religious moderation (*wasatīyyah*) that serves Indonesia's pluralistic context. Together, these contrasting approaches reveal a fundamental transformation of discourse across the classical and modern periods: from viewing *isrā'īlyyāt* primarily as a threat to be contained through rigorous filtration, to engaging them selectively as tools for constructing a national Islamic identity that is both authentically grounded and contextually relevant. Thus, the

treatment of *isrā'īlyyāt* in surah Al-A'rāf (7): 157 becomes not merely a methodological choice but a site where broader configurations of religious authority are negotiated, asserted, and reproduced.

Analysis of Discursive Practice: Production and Intertextuality

In the dimension of discursive practice, Ibn Kašīr's interpretation of surah Al-A'rāf (7): 157 represents a sophisticated mechanism of knowledge production in response to claims of the prophethood of Muhammad in earlier scriptures. As an intellectual product of the 8th century Hijri, this work does not merely compile narrations but operates to construct exegetical authority through systematic discursive strategies.

In interpreting the verse concerning the attributes of the Prophet Muhammad in the Torah and the Gospel, Ibn Kašīr applies a particular pattern of intertextuality. His textual production process reveals a clear epistemological hierarchy: the interpretation is reinforced with specific narrations, such as the account of a Jewish youth who embraced Islam (Ibn Ḥanbal 1420 H., XXXVIII/476) and Heraclius' description of the images of the prophets (Al-Baihaqiy 1985, I/386). Each layer of evidence is methodically arranged to build an argument that progressively reinforces the interpretive claim.

Ibn Kašīr's discursive strategy in handling *isrā'īlyyāt* in this verse is particularly noteworthy. Rather than outright rejecting material from the Ahl Kitāb, he selectively employs it through a dual verification mechanism. The narration of 'Aṭā' ibn Yasār from 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr regarding the description of the Prophet in the Torah (... *laysa bifazẓin wa lā galiz, wa lā šākhkhāibn fi al-āswāq, wa lā yajzī bis-sayyi'ati as-sayyi'ata, wa lakin ya'fū wa yašfahu*) is not merely quoted (Ibn Kašīr 1999, III/486) but also confirmed through a valid chain of transmission (*isnād*) and compared with the version in Al-Bukhāriy (Al-Bukhāriy 1422 H., III/66). This approach demonstrates how *isrā'īlyyāt* that meet the criterion of conformity with Islamic law can be mobilized as apologetic tools within the framework of Sunni orthodoxy.

The implied textual consumption process envisioned by Ibn Kašīr is also worthy of attention. By presenting diverse evidence from Jewish sources that converted to Islam—as mentioned in the narration of 'Aṭā', which confirms the reports of 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr and Ka'b al-Aḥbār (Ibn Kašīr 1999, III/486), he constructs a discourse that positions readers to discern the nuance between usage as supporting evidence (*istisyhād*) versus as a foundation of belief (*i'tiqād*). This pattern implies a readership capable of navigating this distinction, thereby reproducing the interpretive community's investment in the *sanad* system.

What is most prominent in his interpretation of this verse is how Ibn Kašīr engages in complex authority negotiation. On one hand, he acknowledges the existence of prophecies in previous scriptures, but on the other, he affirms the superiority of Islam through stringent verification mechanisms. When citing the narration regarding Heraclius' depiction of the prophets, he does not accept it uncritically but includes an evaluation of its chain as not problematic (*lā ba's bihī*) as a form of quality control (Ibn Kašīr 1999, III/486). This practice serves to reinforce the authority of the *sanad* system itself.

This discursive strategy creates a balance between acknowledging prior narrative heritage and asserting Islamic authority as the supreme criterion of truth. Every act of intertextuality in interpreting surah Al-A'rāf (7): 157 operates not as an admission of epistemological equality but as the subordination of external material under a rigorous Islamic verification framework. Through this approach, Ibn Kaşir positions his interpretation as inclusive of historical evidence while maintaining Islam's epistemological autonomy.

Meanwhile, the interpretation of surah Al-A'rāf (7): 157 in *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsirnya* by the Ministry of Religious Affairs represents a mode of religious knowledge production shaped by the Indonesian state context. As a state institutional product, this exegesis not only explains textual meanings but actively participates in constructing religious discourse aligned with national interests—unity and harmony. Its production process involves a team of experts working within the framework of state ideology that upholds religious moderation, plurality, and Pancasila values.

The applied intertextuality strategy reflects an inclusive yet critical approach. By quoting references from the Old and New Testaments—such as Genesis, Deuteronomy, and John—this commentary establishes a dialogical bridge with previous scriptural traditions (Departemen Agama RI 2011, III/497-499). However, this intertextuality is not naive; each quotation is selectively chosen and contextualized to position Islam as the perfection of Abrahamic religions while affirming the principle of *tawassuţ* (moderation) characteristic of Indonesian Islam.

From the perspective of distribution and consumption, this commentary addresses Indonesia's heterogeneous Muslim society. The language employed is chosen for comprehensibility across various demographics, from academics to the general public (Departemen Agama RI 2011, III/497-500). This pattern reveals an awareness of Indonesia's diverse socio-cultural landscape, wherein Qur'anic interpretation is designed to bridge varying levels of religious understanding.

Notably, the discursive practice in this commentary reproduces nationalistic discourse through religious interpretation. The emphasis on “removing burdens and shackles” is interpreted not only theologically but also as a spirit to liberate society from narrow-mindedness and extremism. The interpretation of “enjoining good and forbidding evil” (*amr ma'rūfnaḥy munkar*) as actions beneficial to humanity also aligns with the values of religious harmony in Indonesia (Departemen Agama RI 2011, III/499). This alignment serves to naturalize the state's role as the legitimate interpreter of prophetic values for contemporary Indonesian society.

The implied textual consumption process envisioned by *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsirnya* constructs an idealized Indonesian Muslim subject: one who comprehends religion substantively, remains open to other civilizational treasures, yet maintains a critical stance toward differences. By presenting evidence of prophethood from various sources, this commentary positions readers to engage comparatively while reaffirming Islamic identity as the ultimate framework. This discursive strategy normalizes a particular mode of religiosity that is simultaneously inclusive and hegemonically

Islamic, reproducing the state's vision of religious moderation as the natural orientation for Indonesian Muslims.

From a critical discourse perspective informed by Gramsci's concept of hegemony as mediated through Fairclough's framework, *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsirnya* by the Ministry of Religious Affairs can be understood as participating in the construction and legitimation of a state-sanctioned orthodoxy. Its discursive strategies—the selective incorporation of biblical references, the systematic categorization of prophetic attributes, and the consistent framing of interpretation within the discourse of social benefit (*maṣlahah*)—do not merely reflect religious moderation but actively naturalize a particular configuration of religious authority. Through these strategies, the text positions the state as the legitimate mediator of prophetic meaning for Indonesian society, rendering this institutional role seemingly self-evident and unproblematic. The ideological work performed here is the naturalization of hegemony: the state's interpretive authority appears not as a political intervention but as the natural outgrowth of Islam's compatibility with Indonesian nationhood.

Similarly, Ibn Kaṣīr's discursive practice can be read through the same lens. His rigorous adherence to *sanad* and systematic filtering of *isrā'īlyyāt* functions to reproduce and legitimize Sunni orthodoxy as the authoritative interpretive framework. By repeatedly demonstrating how proper methodology—relying on sound chains of transmission—produces correct interpretation, the text naturalizes the scholarly tradition's authority, obscuring the fact that this authority is itself a historical construction maintained through ongoing discursive work. The regime of truth enacted through Ibn Kaṣīr's selective citation and verification practices positions the classical *mufassir* as the guardian of prophetic tradition, a role that appears inherent to the scholarly project rather than a specific claim to power within the interpretive field.

Both tafsir works, despite their vastly different contexts, engage in parallel hegemonic projects: they each construct a particular interpretive framework as the natural, self-evident, and authoritative way of engaging with surah Al-A'rāf (7): 157. Ibn Kaṣīr's framework naturalizes the authority of classical Sunni scholarship; the Ministry's framework naturalizes the authority of the modern nation-state over religious interpretation. In both cases, the treatment of *isrā'īlyyāt* becomes a site where broader struggles over interpretive authority are negotiated and resolved in favor of specific institutional interests—the scholarly tradition in the classical context, and the state in contemporary Indonesia. The power of these discourses lies precisely in their ability to make these institutional arrangements appear not as contingent historical products but as the natural order of Islamic interpretation.

Analysis of Social Practice: Ideology and the Construction of Authority over Isrā'īlyyāt

At the dimension of social practice, Ibn Kaṣīr's interpretation of surah Al-A'rāf (7): 157 must be understood within the broader context of discursive contestation in the 8th-century Hijri Islamic world. The verse concerning the prophecy of Muhammad in the Torah and the Gospel serves as a strategic discursive field for strengthening Islam's position in the theological engagement with other Abrahamic faiths. As a student of Ibn

Taymiyyah, Ibn Kaşir’s intellectual stance is inextricably linked to the larger project of Sunni creedal purification underway at the time, within which the issue of *isrā’iliyyāt* became a crucial epistemological battleground.

The discursive strategy developed by Ibn Kaşir in interpreting this verse reveals a form of complex cultural hegemony. Rather than outright rejecting the narrative heritage of the Ahl Kitab concerning prophethood, he adapts it through a rigorous mechanism of islamization. By accepting narrations about the attributes of the Prophet Muhammad from Jewish sources who converted to Islam, such as Ka’b al-Aḥbār—via the narration of ‘Aṭā’ (Ibn Kaşir 1999, III/486)—Ibn Kaşir performs an epistemological appropriation: taking external material yet subordinating it under a strict framework of Islamic verification. This practice not only reinforces Islam’s theological claims but also neutralizes the potentially subversive power of alternative narratives about prophethood.

In his interpretation of surah Al-A’rāf (7): 157, Ibn Kaşir particularly emphasizes the aspect of social transformation brought by Muhammad’s prophethood—“making good things lawful and prohibiting evil, and removing burdens and shackles” (Ibn Kaşir 1999, III/487-489). This emphasis reproduces power relations within the medieval Islamic scholarly structure, where the authority of Sunni scholars as guardians of orthodoxy was reinforced through their ability to filter and classify knowledge from external sources. The tripartite classification of *isrā’iliyyāt*—accepted, rejected, and suspended—functions as an instrument of power that solidifies the scholars’ position as the legitimate gateway to knowledge.

On a deeper level, Ibn Kaşir’s interpretation of this verse can be read as part of a broader hegemonic project. By establishing clear parameters for the utilization of *isrā’iliyyāt*, he shapes a religious common sense that ultimately affirms the dominance of Sunni discourse. Every decision to accept or reject *isrā’iliyyāt* material concerning prophetic prophecy is not a neutral act, but rather part of a political-epistemological strategy to strengthen Islam’s claim as the perfecter of previous religions.

Within the framework of Gramsci’s theory of hegemony (Fairclough 1992, 92), Ibn Kaşir’s interpretive practice regarding surah Al-A’rāf (7): 157 successfully creates a cultural consensus about the correct way to approach pre-Islamic heritage. This consensus is not only relevant in the theological sphere but also carries political implications for maintaining the existing epistemic power structure. By constructing authority through a rigorous mechanism of filtering *isrā’iliyyāt*, Ibn Kaşir not only interprets the text but also actively shapes the religious landscape in support of the perpetuation of orthodox discourse within Sunni Islam.

The interpretation of surah Al-A’rāf (7): 157 from the perspective of social practice in *Al-Qur’an dan Tafsirnya* by the Ministry of Religious Affairs must be understood as part of Indonesia’s nation-building project. As an official state product, this exegesis functions as an instrument of cultural hegemony, articulating religious discourse within the framework of Pancasila ideology and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity). The emphasis on moderation, tolerance, and inclusivity in interpreting the attributes of

Muhammad's prophethood is not a neutral hermeneutic decision but a political-epistemological strategy to shape religious consciousness aligned with state interests.

In this context, the religious authority constructed through this commentary is negotiative—it neither fully rejects classical scholarly authority nor accepts it absolutely. By adopting a *tahliliy* (analytical) approach that accommodates various schools of interpretation, the Ministry of Religious Affairs positions itself as *wasatiyyah* (moderator), capable of bridging classical tradition with contemporary needs. This position enables the state to consolidate plural religious discourses into a unified national narrative.

More strategically, this commentary restructures power relations within the religious sphere. By producing an official interpretation, the state not only provides religious guidance but also establishes legitimized discursive boundaries. The rejection of radical and extremist interpretations, though not always explicit, is implied in the repeated emphasis on *rahmatan lil-'ālamīn* (mercy to the worlds) and universal benefit (*maṣlahah*) in interpreting prophetic attributes (Departemen Agama RI 2011, III/497-500).

The discursive practice in this commentary also reveals a complex hegemonic project. Within the Gramscian framework of hegemony (Fairclough 1992, 92), *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsirnya* by the Ministry of Religious Affairs successfully creates a new common sense about the relationship between Islam and the state in Indonesia. Through the interpretation of surah Al-A'rāf (7): 157 that emphasizes moderation and social transformation, the state not only legitimizes its existence but also actively shapes the ideal religious subject—a Muslim who is devout in religion while remaining loyal to the state. Every emphasis on public benefit in interpreting enjoining good and forbidding evil (*amr ma'rūf nahy munkar*) (Departemen Agama RI 2011, III/499) constitutes part of a larger project to create a harmonious social order under the umbrella of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

Finally, through this analysis of social practice, it becomes clear how the Ministry's Commentary functions as an instrument of governmentality in Foucault's theory—a mechanism to regulate societal religious behavior without resorting to direct coercion (Mudhoffir 2013, 12). The religious authority constructed through this official interpretation ultimately strengthens the state's position as both the guardian of religious orthodoxy and the guarantor of religious harmony in Indonesia.

Comparative Synthesis: Convergence and Divergence in Interpretive Authority

Based on a comprehensive analysis of the interpretation of surah Al-A'rāf (7): 157 in Ibn Kašīr's *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm* and the Ministry of Religious Affairs' *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsirnya*, both significant points of convergence and divergence can be identified in the construction of religious authoritative discourse. Fundamentally, both commentaries agree on acknowledging the authenticity of the prophecy of Muhammad in previous scriptures, yet their methodological approaches reflect differing socio-historical contexts.

In terms of convergence, both exegetical works similarly position the Qur'an as the supreme authority for verifying truth. Ibn Kaşir achieves this through a strict mechanism of islamizing *isrā'iliyyāt*, whereas *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsirnya* employs a filter based on state ideology grounded in Pancasila. Both also concur in functionally utilizing *isrā'iliyyāt* as supporting evidence (*istisyhād*) for doctrinal foundations, albeit with differing degrees of rigor. The intertextual patterns applied by both demonstrate an awareness of the importance of building epistemological bridges with previous scriptural traditions, without compromising the central position of Islam.

However, a fundamental divergence lies in the very construction of interpretive authority. Ibn Kaşir builds authority through the authenticity of scholarly transmission (*isnād*) and the depth of philological-historical analysis, thereby reproducing the classical Sunni scholarly authority structure. In contrast, *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsirnya* constructs authority through state institutional legitimacy and socio-cultural relevance, reflecting a model of religious authority within the framework of Indonesian nationhood. This difference is reflected in their discursive strategies: Ibn Kaşir tends to be restrictive with a stringent tripartite classification, while *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsirnya* is more accommodative, emphasizing universal values.

In addressing the research questions, it becomes clear that each commentary developed an authority model suited to its temporal context. Ibn Kaşir can be understood as constructing authority through the purification and systematization of prior intellectual heritage, whereas *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsirnya* constructed authority through contextualization and integration with national values. Despite their differences, both models operated as mechanisms for filtering *isrā'iliyyāt* according to the needs of their respective readerships.

The comparative analysis can be pushed further by examining the divergent epistemic regimes underlying each tafsir—a concept drawn from Michel Foucault's notion of regime of truth, which refers to the procedures, institutions, and practices that determine what counts as legitimate knowledge (Ibana 2021). Ibn Kaşir's work operates within an ulama-centered epistemic hierarchy, where the production of authoritative religious knowledge is governed by the classical scholarly apparatus of *sanad*, *ijāzah*, and scholarly consensus (*ijmā'*). Within this regime, truth is validated through chains of transmission that connect the interpreter to prophetic sources, and the *mufassir's* authority derives from his recognized position within this inherited structure. The treatment of *isrā'iliyyāt* in his tafsir exemplifies this logic: narratives are admitted only after undergoing verification through established procedures, thereby reproducing the self-referential authority of Sunni scholasticism as a closed system of knowledge legitimation.

By contrast, *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsirnya* by the Ministry of Religious Affairs operates within a fundamentally different epistemic regime—what can be termed state-mediated knowledge governance. Here, the validation of religious truth no longer relies exclusively on scholarly lineage but is increasingly mediated by institutional frameworks aligned with national ideology. The commentary's production by a state-appointed team, its legitimation through Pancasila and the discourse of religious

moderation (*wasatīyyah*), and its framing of interpretation within the language of social benefit (*maṣlahah*) reflect a process of bureaucratic rationalization of religion. In this configuration, the state positions itself as the arbiter of legitimate religious knowledge, not by displacing ulama entirely but by subordinating their authority to institutional oversight. The epistemic shift is profound: where Ibn Kaṣīr's regime of truth relies on the self-referential continuity of scholarly tradition, the Ministry's regime introduces an external criterion—the state's vision of national cohesion—as the ultimate frame for validating religious interpretation.

What this study contributes to the broader academic conversation is a demonstration that *isrāʿīliyyāt* functions not merely as a residual category of exegetical material but as a strategic site for negotiating interpretive authority across historical and institutional contexts. By examining how two paradigmatic tafsir works—representing classical scholarly autonomy and modern state stewardship—construct their respective regimes of truth through the treatment of *isrāʿīliyyāt*, the study reveals that the management of these narratives is never a purely technical exercise in source criticism. Rather, it is a discursive practice through which broader configurations of power are articulated and naturalized. Ibn Kaṣīr's filtering mechanisms reproduce the authority of the scholarly tradition as self-evident; the Ministry's reconstructive strategies reframe *isrāʿīliyyāt* as resources for national cohesion, thereby naturalizing the state's role as the legitimate mediator of prophetic meaning. This comparative lens thus advances existing scholarship by moving beyond the question of whether *isrāʿīliyyāt* are acceptable or not, to interrogating the very conditions under which such acceptability is defined, by whom, and for what ideological purposes.

Finally, this comparative synthesis demonstrates that the discourse of authority in Qur'anic interpretation is not static but is continuously reconfigured within shifting socio-political contexts. Both Ibn Kaṣīr and *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsirnya*, through their respective discursive strategies, have participated in shaping exegetical traditions that simultaneously reproduce existing configurations of power while adapting to the demands of their historical moments. By foregrounding *isrāʿīliyyāt* as a strategic site where competing claims to authority are negotiated, this study contributes a critical framework for understanding how religious knowledge is produced, legitimized, and naturalized across radically different institutional and ideological landscapes—from the classical scholarly tradition to the modern nation-state.

Conclusion

Based on a comparative analysis of the interpretation of surah Al-A'rāf (7): 157 in Ibn Kaṣīr's *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm* and the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs' *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsirnya*, it can be concluded that both exegetical works offer distinct yet equally valuable approaches to interpreting the prophecy of the Prophet Muhammad *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam* in the Torah and the Gospel. Ibn Kaṣīr, employing the *tafsīr bil-ma'sūr* methodology, emphasizes rigorous caution toward *isrāʿīliyyāt*. He utilizes narrations with strong chains of transmission (*isnād*) and only accepts elements of *isrāʿīliyyāt* that align with the Qur'an and Sunnah. His emphasis lies in strict verification

and the function of *isrāʿīlyyāt* as supporting evidence (*istisyhād*), not as a foundation for belief. Meanwhile, *Al-Qurʿan dan Tafsirnya* adopts a contemporary approach characterized as *taḥlīlīy ijtimāʿīy* (socio-analytical). This commentary places greater emphasis on contextualizing meaning within the reality of Indonesia's diverse society and constructing a narrative that supports religious moderation and social harmony, without neglecting the principle of the Qur'an's truth.

In constructing a discourse of authority regarding *isrāʿīlyyāt*, the two commentaries also demonstrate differing strategies that reflect their respective historical contexts and interests. Ibn Kašīr builds authority through the depth of transmission (*sanad*), philological precision, and fidelity to the orthodox Sunni framework. His authority stems from the individual scholarly capacity to filter pre-Islamic narrative heritage through strict classification. On the other hand, *Al-Qurʿan dan Tafsirnya* builds authority through state institutional legitimacy and social relevance. Its authority is derived not only from textual truth but also from its ability to create harmony between Islamic teachings and Indonesian national values, such as Pancasila and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity).

Thus, despite differences in era and approach, both commentaries have successfully established effective authoritative mechanisms for managing the influence of *isrāʿīlyyāt*. Ibn Kašīr achieved this through the purification and systematization of knowledge, while the Ministry of Religious Affairs accomplished it through contextualization and value integration. This difference, in fact, enriches the treasury of Qurʿanic interpretation, demonstrating that religious authority in Islam is not monolithic. It can be constructed through various strategies that remain grounded in the principle of safeguarding doctrinal purity while maintaining social relevance.

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