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Ahmad Sonhadji's Moderation Interpretation in `Abbru al-Aṣīr Based on the Gadamer's Hermeneutic Perspective

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Abstract : This article aims to explore the moderating dimension of Ahmad Sonhadji's interpretation in his Tafsir, 'Abbru al-Aṣīr. This work is based on Sonhadji's lecture on Singapore radio. Some scholars claimed that he was an influential commentator, an icon of commentator and social reformer, and a proponent of the principle of moderation in Singapore. This literature research was carried out using qualitative methods and heuristic analysis. The researchers examined Sonhadji's interpretation of popular verses in the study of moderation. The data were classified based on Gadamer's hermeneutic principles. This research revealed that the meaningful sense of Sonhadji's interpretation gave birth to objective moderate principles, such as upholding justice, obeying the leader's rules, not considering one's own religion as the most correct that leads to humiliation of other religions, not being excessive, and understanding religion proportionally.

Keywords: Interpreter; Ahmad Sonhadji; Horizon of the Text; Moderation Verses.

Abstrak : Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi dimensi moderasi penafsiran Ahmad Sonhadji dalam karya Tafsirnya, 'Abbru al-Aṣīr. Karya ini berasal dari ceramah Sonhadji di Radio Singapura. Sebagian sarjana mengklaim bahwa ia sebagai mufasir berpengaruh, ikon tafsir dan tokoh reformis sosial, dan pendukung prinsip moderasi di Singapura. Riset kepustakaan ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif dan analisis heuristik. Penulis menyisir penafsiran Sonhadji terhadap ayat populer dalam kajian moderasi. Data diklasifikasi berdasarkan prinsip hermeneutika Gadamer. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa meaningful sense penafsiran Sonhadji melahirkan prinsip moderat yang objektif yaitu menegakkan keadilan, patuh terhadap aturan pemimpin, tidak menganggap agamanya yang paling benar sehingga menghinakan agama lain, tidak melampaui batas, dan memahami agama secara proporsional.

Kata Kunci: Penafsir; Ahmad Sonhadji; Horizon Teks; Ayat-ayat Moderasi

INTRODUCTION

Moderation is defined as a way of thinking, acting, and behaving that consistently takes the middle ground, upholds justice, and abstains from extreme religious views (Indonesia and Indonesia 2019: 17). Scholars have long led efforts to resurrect the values of moderation. In the case of *ushul fiqh*, for example, each school differs from the others at times. These distinctions are intended to compensate for differences in local cultural customs (Abdillah 2016: 24). These efforts to revive moderation were then carried on by modern scholars.

One of the contemporary Malay commentators who supported the principle of religious moderation was Ahmad Sonhadji.¹ He was a twentieth-century scientist, preacher, and commentator who had played an important role in the treasures of interpretation in Southeast Asia, particularly Singapore (Said 2018: 223). He was also a figure who genuinely cared about religious communities coexisting peacefully; he could even be described as a social reformer (Thaha and Abdullah 2019, 1). Sonhadji's moderation as a commentator in the study of interpretation can be assessed by looking at his interpretation, works, behavior, customs of the time and place he lived.

Dominating current studies related to the moderation in tafsir still revolve around its the origin, epistemology, and ontology (Budiono, 2021; Faozi, 2021; Ghozali & Rizal, 2021, 2021; Huda et al., 2020; Maburur, 2019; Zamimah, 2015). Faozi emphasized Tafsir al-Azhar's application of the idea that those in the middle position and following a straight route are not preoccupied on the outside world and are more interested in their own religion. (Faozi, 2021: vi). Likewise, Ghozali found that moderation is not only about religion but also humanitarian attitudes between individuals without distinguishing religion as in Surah al-Baqarah verse 143 and al-Maidah verse 66 (Ghozali & Rizal, 2021: 31). As for the material object of this research, it revolves around Sonhadji's prominence in the treasures of tafsir in Malay world, his thought and interpretation method (Hamisan, 2014; Hassan & Bahari, 2020; Ibrahim et al., 2011; Said, 2018; Sulaiman, 2010; Yusoff, 2000). On the other hand, Hassan and Bahari are concerned with Sonhadji's moderate, but focus on his khutbah content that fosters tawhid and faith (Hassan & Bahari, 2020: 14). However, their viewpoint does not see this moderate side in Gadamer's hermeneutic perspective. The use of this perspective on the object of interpretation, among others, was carried out by Sofyan, Hanif, Rahmatullah and Mudin. (Hanif, 2017; Kau, 2014; Mudin et al., 2021)

This research attempts to uncover the production of new meaning from the book *Tafsir al-Qur'an 'Abru al-Aṣīr (Tafsir al-Qur'an di Radio)*, [in writing this research, then written with 'Abru al-Aṣīr]. It should be noted that the new interpretations produced here are ideas that had not previously appeared in Singapore at the time the text of this interpretation was conveyed by Sonhadji through his lectures on local radio broadcasts. Gadamer's hermeneutical approach is used to demonstrate that what happened in the past context will not be the same as what happens in the next era. Sonhadji's existence as a Javanese born in Rengat who grew up in Singapore until its independence from colonialism indicates that the local community could accept his moderate attitude amid its cultural diversity.

METHOD

This study employs a text-based qualitative methodology, utilizing primary data from Sonhadji's tafsir book *'Abru al-Aṣīr* (Said, 2018: 223). The author draws attention to how she has interpreted some verses that have been determined to have a moderate meaning. The Republic of Indonesia's Ministry of Religion developed the categories for the moderate indicator, drawing on the book *Religious Moderation* (Indonesia & Indonesia, 2019). The information provided by the author can be gleaned from four letters: al-Baqarah 143, Ālu

¹ Ahmad Sonhadji whose full name is Ahmad Sonhadji Mohamad (hereinafter read Sonhadji) was born on Friday 24 Dzulhijjah 1430/18 August 1922 in Pengging Village, Surakarta (Solo), Central Java, Republic of Indonesia. His father is Mohamad Milatu bin Haji Harmain Othman bin Hasan. His mother named Umami Salamah bint Haji Anwar bin Prawiro Dikromo was connected to Raden Husein.

Imrān 110, an-Nisā 59, and al-An'ām 108. The author then applies Gadamer's hermeneutics to identify the author's interpretation.

This approach was selected to show how *'Abru al-Aṣīr* was being used to produce new meanings. The strategy is meant to demonstrate that the past will not repeat itself in the future (Hasanah, 2017: 14). The fact that Sonhadji is a Javanese born in Rengat who lived in Singapore until the country's freedom from colonialism demonstrates that the locals are able to tolerate his moderate outlook in the face of cultural diversity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Text and Gadamer's Hermeneutic Cycle

`Abru al-Aṣīr is both a text and a historical product. It is necessary to recognize the context to understand the interpretation of the text. Gadamer proposed four steps for gaining a thorough understanding of the particular text (Sumaryono 1999: 63). The first is "*Wirkungsgeschichte*" (history of influence). The term *Wirkungsgeschichte* refers to the reader's involvement in history, specifically a situation in which we as historical actors do not exceed the actual history. As a result, the researcher's history can more or less reflect the forces of influence that occurred during the period of history under study (Miftahudin 2018). According to this view, every commentator encounters circumstances that may affect how he interprets the translated text. An 'effective history' is what Gadamer refers to as. (Syamsuddin 2017: 79).

There are four stages in effective history that influence the reader. 1) Awareness of the situation around the reader (Mu'awwanah 2018: 283). 2) Intellectual tradition. 3) The logic of the times or paradigms formed in an era that influences a reader, whether positive or negative. 4) Self-reflection (Hasanah 2017: 14). Through these four historical stages, the reader's horizon will be formed.

The second is pre-understanding. Gadamer said the presence of *Wirkungsgeschichte* or the influence of the hermeneutic situation can result in prejudice against the interpreted text (interpretation is based on prejudice) (Warnke 1987: 99). Hermeneutic prejudice occurs when a reader carefully and critically reads and understands a text. Thus, a text will colonize the reader's cognitive consciousness. It is difficult for an individual to obtain accurate data on the origin of a text and accept sources of authority without critical argument (Kau 2014: 115).

A person's understanding of a text begins with sensitivity to its novelty. A reader should have the curiosity that the text wants to convey a message to him. This sensitivity does not initiate with the reader who is still neutral but rather incorporation prejudices derived from the reader or interpreter's self. The interpreter can judge the text and the truth through the play of his own prejudices by positioning himself in his tradition. Gadamer argued prejudice can bring up both positive and negative aspects that must be addressed. The distinction between legitimate and illegitimate prejudices will be obtained through rehabilitation. In this case, prejudice is classified as either authority prejudice (based on authority outside of oneself) or hasty prejudice (hasty nature without the use of ratio elements first) (Muzir 2020: 132). The division of prejudice into authority and haste is based on the fundamental premise of enlightenment, according to which the use of methodologically sound reasoning can absolve one of all guilt. Excessive haste is the source of error in rational use (Gadamer 1975: 279). Thus, legitimate and positive prejudices are those that are not hasty, namely those that are based on authority prejudice (Muzir 2020: 282).

The third is the fusion of the horizon and the hermeneutical circle. The pre-understanding rehabilitation process is linked to the fusion of horizon theory. Gadamer pinpointed that an interpreter does not approach the text objectively and does not take part in the interpretation process; however, during the interpretation process, there is a fusion between an interpreter's horizon and the horizon of the text, thus giving birth to a new horizon that expands the horizon of an interpreter. From Gadamer's perspective, successful hermeneutics can produce meaning rather than one that reproduces meaning (Hasanah 2017: 14).

Gadamer mentioned that "pre-understanding" is the first step in critically understanding a text. Gadamer placed great emphasis on the words "understand" for the reader of the text. This concept considers understanding as a circular process. To achieve understanding, one must first establish a point of understanding. For example, in order to comprehend a text, a reader must first have a pre-understanding of the text. It is impossible to understand the text unless this prerequisite is fulfilled. However, by reading the text, pre-understanding is transformed into real understanding. Gadamer referred to this process as "The Hermeneutical Circle." This circle exists at the most fundamental level of human existence. "Understanding" the world is only possible if there is a prior understanding of the world and ourselves, which allows us to recognize our own existence.

The fourth step is application. An interpreter must be able to apply what he has learned from previous scriptural texts to the situation in which the text is interpreted (Mu'awwanah 2018: 285). The process of applying an understanding, according to Gadamer, is part of the understanding itself because the application process will give birth to a new understanding (Hasanah 2017: 14). Thus, Gadamer not only considered hermeneutics to be a method or art but also an experience. This experience will eventually lead to a chain of understanding of universal meaningful sense (a meaning that is higher than the literal meaning) (Syamsuddin 2017: 52).

Sonhadji's Horizon as an Interpreter

Sonhadji spent a significant amount of time studying and developing da'wah. His thought pattern was formed while he was living in Rengat, where he received direct lessons from his father in history, fine Javanese, *Kromo*, and customs (Suratman 1997: 15). In addition, he also received education from his mother, who was fluent in the Qur'an and the Jawi language. Then, he traveled to Singapore with his grandfather and many teachers from Indonesia. Sonhadji learned the Qur'an and Tafsir from his grandfather, Imam Muslim, and his great-grandfather, Kyai Raden Kubagus Imam Syuhodo, a teacher to the Sultan of Solo (Hassan and Bahari 2020: 4), one of Sunan Pakubuwana IV's Qur'an teachers.

Sonhadji moved to Singapore when he was five years old. He returned to Indonesia and continued his education in Singapore at the age of 14, beginning with the *tahdiri* level and graduating in 1944 from Madrasah al-Junied. Sonhadji remained in Singapore until the end of World War II in 1945 (Suratman 1997: 45). Sonhadji's stay in Singapore was due to his responsibility as a result of his marriage in 1945, as well as the fact that he was a teacher, a preacher, an imam, and a writer, who actively participated in various political and religious fields (Suratman 1997: 87). In his understanding and practice of Islam, Sonhadji was a traditionalist. Traditionalists refer to those who understand and practice Islamic teachings based on the legacy of previous scholars. This interpreter, who grew up in Singapore, belonged to the *Shafi'i* school of thought and was an expert in the *Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* creed (Sulaiman 2010: i).

Sonhadji wrote 'Abbru al-Ašīr while living in Singapore and actively giving religious lectures. He decided to write the contents of the lecture in a book while he was in Makkah al-Mukarramah (Milatu 2021a: 2). He referred to the classical commentary literature that he inherited from his ancestors in Rengat. The literature was *Hasyiatul Jamal 'ala al-Jalalain, al-Khāzin, al-Marāghī, and an-Naisāburi*, apart from referring to the books of *Tafsir at-Ṭabari, Afwat at-tafāsir, and al-Jawāhir*. Sonhadji admitted to quoting reputable books. This acknowledgment represents a mental state in which one recognizes his limitations and accepts that others have a better understanding. This is what Gadamer meant by putting authority in its proper place (Gadamer 1975: 281).

'Abbru al-Ašīr was written over a period of 25 years and 2 months (19 February 1959 - 26 April 1984). The author's beginnings coincided with the crisis in Singapore in 1959 when the British Empire provided internal government under the Kingdom. Singapore gained independence in 1963 and officially seceded from Malaysia on August 9, 1965. During the writing of this commentary, the Singapore Islamic Ulema Council was also formed, so Islam has recently been involved in Singapore's politics and courts. The AMLA (The Administration of Muslim Law Act) was only passed in 1966 and it was the moment when the adaptability in enforcing Islam was obtained. Muslims in Singapore, on the other hand, were a minority, so they must be able to adapt, cooperate, and struggle to maintain their identity rather than break away from Singapore's national ties (Sudrajat n.d.: 20).

It is based on prejudice as an initial analytical step in Gadamer's hermeneutical reflection (Gadamer 1975: 274). The researchers believe Sonhadji wrote 'Abbru al-Ašīr' in response to the situations and conditions he was experiencing at the time. This assumption is based on his statement at the beginning of his interpretation of Surah an-Nūr:

"I feel responsible as an educator of Islamic children. Education which is extended to the Islamic community includes the family. In Surah an-Nur, it has been conceptualized how Sayyidina Umar Ra ensured that women should study since she is the model in the family. The concept of state development must also include communities and families that must be guided as effectively as possible, and the best concept is the one that refers to Al Quran, and Surah an-Nur teaches about this" (Suratman 1997: 69).

At the very least, the statement provides an overview of the situation and conditions during that era, when Muslims had aspirations to study religion. With the breadth and experience of Sonhadji as well as his views on his time, 'Abbru al-Ašīr is in the hermeneutical scope.

Horizon of Text 'Abbru al-Ašīr

The Tafsir 'Abbru al-Ašīr has spread throughout the archipelago. This book was originally intended to be a script for a radio lecture on the interpretation of the Qur'an in Singapore, rather than a book (Suratman 1997, 75). He then enlisted the help of his colleagues to record the interpretation. This could also be the reason he named his commentary book 'Abbru al-Ašīr. The name means "crossing the airwaves," and it is also known as Tafsir al-Qur'an on Radio (Hamisan 2014: 5).

This interpretation consists of 30 volumes (1 volume/1 juz) in Malay written in Jawi, the archipelago's lingua franca (Suratman 1997: 11). This interpretation was eventually printed in Latin writing. According to Asari, from 1960 to 2005, this interpretation was the only one that included 30 juz (Asari 2016: 181–82). The publication of this interpretation took a long detour. The National Library of Singapore originally published 14 Juz between December 1960 and 1981. The publication of this book was transferred to the Supreme

Publisher Rabitah Alam al-Islami due to a fee issue. Sonhadji also approached the Malaysian Language and Library Board (DBP), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, and private publishers for assistance. This interpretation was also published by Simal for a total of 8 Juz, but the publisher was forced to close due to a lack of funds. The interpretation was then republished in 30 volumes by the Malaysian company Pustaka al-Mizan (Ibrahim et al. 2011: 453). This agreement, however, was canceled in 1992 because al-Mizan did not carry out Sonhadji's request. Until, finally, Pustaka Salam Sdn. Bhd. agreed to publish only the Rumi and Jawi editions, as well as the translation of the Qur'an. This agreement has been in effect since June 26, 1996 (Suratman 1997: 75).

The source of interpretation used by Sonhadji is *bil-ma'sūr*, which includes both the interpretation of *al-Qur'an bil-Qur'an*, *bil-ḥadīṣ* and *biqauli aṣ-ṣaḥābi* (Yusoff 2000: 207). In addition, he also interpreted using the *bir-ra'yi* (rational) method. He employed three types of interpretation: interpreting the verse with science, interpreting the verse with social factors of his time, and interpreting the verse with meditation or observation (Yusoff 2000: 258). Sonhadji appeared to have used the *tahlili* and *mawḍū'ī* methods. This interpretation was compiled based on the Ottoman mushab arrangement by explaining the *asbāb an-nuzūl* of the verse, analyzing *lafāz* based on linguistic elements, explaining the general meaning of the verse, presenting the *munāsabah* of the verse, and explaining everything that can be deduced from the verses while *al-adab al-ijtimā'ī* is the dominant pattern in the interpretation. This is evident when Sonhadji connected the interpretation of social verses to the social problems of his time.

As a text, *'Abru al-Aṣīr* is the author's response to the events of the time through his reading of the Quran. Sonhadji's prior understanding made him critical, and he proposed new ideas for moderation based on Islamic teachings that he understood. Sonhadji was also influenced by his knowledge of the reality that was occurring when the verses of the Qur'an were revealed (*asbāb nuzūl*) and the references he used in interpreting the Qur'an. The horizons collide, creating what Gadamer refers to as "meaningful sense" momentum (Gadamer 1975: 305–6). At this stage, Sonhadji was in the process of "understanding" how to live the life enshrined in the Qur'an, which focused on socio-religious issues. Sonhadji's entire understanding was then poured out in his interpretation, which was compiled in its entirety in *'Abru al-Aṣīr*.

Historicity of Moderation Verses

The main foundation for analyzing prejudice is an examination of a text's temporality (Muzir 2020: 130). It is also referred to as *asbāb an-nuzūl* in the Qur'an. The following evidence is presented in four Quranic verses.

Surah al-Baqarah verse 143

Surah al-Baqarah verse 143 is contextually and thematically related to verse 142. Verse 143 is Allah's response to the ridicule and reproach of the Jews and Mushrikin regarding the change in the direction of the Muslim Qibla. Their words are recorded in the word of Allah in Surah al-Baqarah verse 142 *"The foolish among the people will ask, "Why did they turn away from the direction of prayer they used to face?"*

The words of Jews and Mushriken appeared to condemn Muslim actions. They were perplexed as to why Muslims altered their Qibla when praying. They used to face the Baitulmaqdis, but then they faced the Kaaba in Mecca (Milatu 2021b: 9). They believed that the change in Qibla's direction was due to a mistake made by the Prophet Muhammad, or that the Prophet only followed his desires because he missed his homeland. Their words

caused Muslims to doubt, and they also said when the direction of the Qibla was changed, the worship previously performed when facing Baitul Maqdis would lose its reward. Allah responded to all of their incitement and accusations in order to strengthen the hearts of Muslims (Shihab 2015: 413). The first response was given directly in relation to the verse above, "Say, 'O Prophet, `the east and west belong `only` to Allah. He guides whoever He wills to the straight path.'" (Milatu 2021b: 9).

Allah's next response is found in Surah al-Baqarah verse 143. In summary, Allah addresses Muslims as "أُمَّةٌ وَسَطًا" i.e. people in the middle who have advantages and goodness given that Muslims are guided by the Prophet Muhammad on how to worship and socialize with other people properly and correctly. Allah's command to change the direction of the Qibla was simply to determine who the Prophet's followers were truly loyal to and who were turning away (Milatu 2021b: 12).

Surah Ali Imrān verse 110

The context of the revelation of Surah Ali Imran verse 110 is recorded at number 4557 in the book of Sahih Bukhari. According to Ikrimah and Muqatil, someone said, "Indeed, our religion is better than your religion, and our nation is better than your nation." As a response, Allah sent down this verse (An-Naisaburi 1991: 78). The sentence that needs to be taken into account in Sonhadji's interpretation of this verse is *wa akṣaruhum al-fāsiqūn*. According to the researchers' interpretation of Sonhadji's statement in this verse, excessive attitudes, insubordination, and disobedience will run rampant if people continue to do evil and do not understand religion proportionally.

Surah an-Nisā` verse 59

This verse is still related to verse 58, in which Allah commands that all mandates be conveyed to the experts who are entitled and a fair punishment be meted out. This verse contains God's commands to believers in three cases: obedience to Allah, His Messenger, and Ulil-Amri. The general benefit that leads to welfare will not be realized if the three cases are not followed (Mohamad 1992a: 89).

Surah al-An`ām verse 108

Historically, in a narration of as-Suddi, this verse was revealed in connection with the Quraysh who asked Abu Talib, whose condition at that time was approaching his death, to call and convey to the Prophet Muhammad not to bother them and ridicule their God. That way they would give breadth to the Prophet and his God. Abu Talib called his nephew, Muhammad Saw. Then, he said to the Prophet Saw: "They are you and your uncle's people." The Prophet Saw replied: "What do they want?" The people who came answered: "We want you to let us with our God, and we will also let you with your affairs and your God". "It appears they have considered your position, Muhammad," Abu Talib said, "so accept their request." The Prophet Saw then said, "Tell me! If I give you this, will you also give me a sentence that, if you say it, will undoubtedly make the Arab and Ajam nations submit to you?". When Abu Jahal heard this, he exclaimed, "I swear I will definitely give it to you, even ten times, what is the sentence?" "Say the sentence *lā ilāha illallāh*," the Prophet responded.

When they heard the sentence, they were both hesitant and disgusted. "Say something else than that sentence because they are surprised and speechless to hear it," Abu Talib said. "O my uncle!" said the Prophet Saw. I would not say anything else even if they brought the sun and placed it in my hand". They were enraged by the statement and responded, "It is better for you not to revile our God, or we will also berate yourself and your God." Then Allah SWT revealed Surah al-An'm verse 108 (Mohamad 1992c: 254–56).The historical

significance of the reason for the revelation of this verse, as well as Sonhadji's interpretation, demonstrates that inviting people to Islam is permissible, but not by insulting God or the teachings they profess.

Interpretation of Moderation Verses

Previous researchers have extensively studied the interpretation of moderation, particularly the word *wasatiyyah*. Among them has also developed a definition for this moderation. However, in this sub-discussion, the researchers will not analyze the definitions proposed by scholars, but rather analyze the interpretation of Sonhadji, which is composed in 'Abru Al-Aṣīr', in the hope that a comprehensive understanding of moderation will be obtained from his thoughts.

Surah al-Baqarah verse 143 contains explicit Qur'anic verses on moderation. Sonhadji said:

"Allah also makes Muslims the best and noble people as the word "أُمَّةٌ وَسْطًا" which means: "middle people." If we look at the words "وَسْطًا" or "middle" there is no obvious advantage or specialty because the middle people are simple and ordinary people. However, if you look at the words "وَسْطًا" or "middle" in essence, they will see the benefits and genuine goodness. Consider people weighing with a balance: would not people be satisfied after seeing the scale in the middle position? So the middle is an indicator of justice, and humans fight for justice to be upheld everywhere." (Milatu 2021b: 10–11).

Based on this expression, the meaning of "أُمَّةٌ وَسْطًا" (in Indonesian terms, moderate) is a person who has a middle attitude who will be a way for him to be fair and uphold justice everywhere. In addition, a moderate does not go off the rails in the sense that he does not deviate from religious teachings; if he does good, he should not go overboard, let alone do evil. Moderate people can serve as role models for others in all aspects of life.

Moderation is a feature of every Islamic teaching because it is a mature attitude that is essential in social life. The manifestation of moderation is to practice all the virtues of religion according to their level, which in this case is always positive. However, in religion, the excessive behavior is no longer good; this is where moderation comes into play (middle attitude). This is the researchers' interpretation of the following Sonhadji's expression:

The Malay proverb says: "Make good restraint, never do evil." In other words, doing good in excess cannot be considered good. It is good to practice it moderately. On the other hand, doing evil - even once - is indeed a bad thing. It is mentioned in the hadith:

خَيْرُ الْأُمُورِ أَوْسَطُهَا

"The best of things is the middle." (Milatu 2021b: 11).

Sonhadji presented definitions in three paradigms based on his interpretation of verses that contain the meaning of moderation. First, maintain the attitude of moderation when interacting. In this case, a moderate must be able to uphold justice everywhere, foster peace among people, prioritize shared opinions over personal opinions, and forge kinship ties. One of the fundamental principles of moderation is fairness. Justice must be applied not only in particular positions, but also in all aspects, including sharia, creed, morals, and so on. It will later avoid extreme or excessive behavior when implementing religion as a result of this fair attitude. Sonhadji's interpretation of Surah al-Maidah verse 8 demonstrates this:

Do not be influenced by your feelings of hatred for people who oppose you, and then act arbitrarily on them in a way that goes beyond justice. Allah forbids those who act arbitrarily, which is an act that goes beyond the bounds of humanity, even when it is

against an enemy. In fact, Allah commands believers to be just to both friends and foes, because doing so is a form of worship and obedience to Allah." (Mohamad 1992b: 99).

Furthermore, the prohibition of excessive religiosity applies not only to matters of justice but also to respect the religion of others. A moderate is forbidden from considering his or her opinion or religion to be the most proper to the point of demeaning other religions because this will eventually lead to religious community divisions. This is according to Sonhadji's interpretation of Surah al-An'ām verse 108:

The prohibition on cursing or reviling disbelievers' idols is intended to prevent them from cursing and reviling Allah as a result of their ignorance. In short, because they are accustomed to it, they value their deed so they passed it down from generation to generation as an heirloom. In the end, after being raised from the grave, they return to God and are not returned to anyone else because there is no other God except Allah. (Mohamad 1992c: 256).

This first paradigm does not escape from prioritizing what God relishes, especially when it comes to building relationships. Sonhadji emphasized that the most important thing is to have a good relationship with Allah. Allah commands that mankind be dispersed throughout the world, but humans must know the existence of Allah, remember Allah, and understand that to Allah they will return. Second, moderation in the state. This type of moderation has never been elaborated by previous researchers. Sonhadji asserted that obedience to state leaders, officials, and others is an obligation, with the condition that the leader does not deviate from Islamic teachings. Sonhadji stated this in his commentary on the interpretation of surah an-Nisa verse 59 in the sentence. "وَأُولَى الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ":

Ulul Amri has a broad meaning and understanding including leaders, government employees, religious scholars, army leaders, and other leaders. They also held "Ahalilhalla wal'aqdi," which means people capable of completing affairs and organizing Muslim matters, which can bring benefit and prosperity. Therefore, their orders must be obeyed as long as they do not conflict with the commands of Allah and His Messenger (Mohamad 1992a: 90).

Third, moderation in religion. In this case, moderation means that there is no element of coercion in religion, that it does not exceed the previously described limits, and that religion must be understood proportionally. If we turn to the current phenomenon, it is obvious that the attitude of forcing and exceeding boundaries in religion is common. As a result, religious communities are divided. This issue will continue to occur as long as humanity does not understand religion proportionally.

The Present Horizon

When applying Gadamer's present horizon theory (Gadamer 1975: 305), researchers, as readers, had to broaden their present horizon to reach past horizons in order to creatively understand the text. As a result, this research was started with the discussion of the interpreter horizon, text horizon, historicity, and interpretation horizon (Rahardjo 2020: 65). The researchers have identified at least three important roles of Sonhadji's moderation. To begin with, it serves as a foundation for investigating the socio-religious conflict that is currently on the rise. In addition, it is also used as a means of resolving existing conflicts. The last, it functions as a fundamental aspect of a safe and peaceful life from this world to the hereafter based on the Qur'anic teachings.

Sonhadji's moderation has a practical involvement in fostering one's moral qualities and personality. In a sense, this moderation can be taken into consideration in assessing

cases of certain actions that are suspected of being extreme. Furthermore, Sonhadji's moderation interpretation can be used as a reference in understanding and applying the verses concerning socializing to achieve a peaceful and comfortable life in both this world and the afterlife. Sonhadji moderation teaches a person to be in the middle or to be balanced when performing worship and socializing with fellow Muslims and fellow humans.

Supposedly, Singaporean leaders should reconsider Sonhadji's work and ideas because when the Minister of Religion held a digital meeting with the Singaporean Ambassador, Anil Kumar Nayar, Singapore praised Indonesia's handling of religious differences (Indonesia 2021). With this, Sonhadji's work is expected to be used as a reference in dealing with religious differences in that country.

By referring to surah al-Baqarah verse 143, which the researchers described earlier, it can be understood that moderation can be implemented in today's life because it is a creative effort to develop a balanced and fair attitude that is in accordance with religious teachings in the face of various obstacles, such as the contradiction between absolute truth claims and subjectivity, between literal interpretation and arrogant rejection of teachings, and also between radicalism and secularism.

Moderation is implemented by obeying state rules, as implied by Surah an-Nisa 59. A moderate always initiates all goodness for the benefit of human life and is balanced in understanding all principles in life, both in the social and spiritual realms, because prosperity cannot be created if people do not understand the rules proportionally. Surah Ali Imran verse 110 implies this meaning. Not less important, implementing moderation as outlined in Surah al-An'am verse 108 entails abandoning the behavior of assuming that one's own religion is the most correct. Islam does command other religions to convert to Islam, but not in an insulting way.

Furthermore, being moderate entails being able to identify which things take precedence over personal interests. Additionally, in order to uphold justice in a court, both judges and witnesses must put aside their personal interests, as Allah clearly explains in Surah al-Maidah verse 8. Moderation will not be realized if individuals or groups continue to prioritize their own group. Thus, implementing moderation on a large scale will produce individuals who always uphold moral qualities, identity, integrity, and achievements that can bring about a relatively better and quality civilization.

CONCLUSION

Looking at the verses of moderation in '*Abu al-Asir* through the lens of Gadamer's hermeneutics offers a new perspective on moderation. The researchers, as readers, conclude, based on Sonhadji's socio-religious life, experience, and knowledge, that Sonhadji views moderation as a thought whose purpose is for the good of Muslims and the State. The phenomenon that occurred during his time influenced his understanding of interpreting moderate verses by conditioning the understanding of the Islamic community who lived in secular Singapore among a diversity of religious backgrounds. From a textual standpoint, the verses of moderation discuss the proper manner of social interaction, state, and religion. The fusion of Sonhadji's horizon and the text produces a meaningful sense in the interpretation of these verses. Objectively, moderation is defined as behavior that promotes shared opinions, upholds justice, mediates and creates peace, respects other people's religions, obeys leaders in accordance with religious law, and understands religion proportionally. In the present horizon, Sonhadji's moderation can serve as a foundation for investigating and mitigating the emergence of *ummah* divisions.

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