



**Studi Kitab *al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an*
karya Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad**

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Abstract

*This study aims to examine Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad's views on women in the Qur'an, as presented in his work *al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an*. Using a qualitative library research method with descriptive-analytical and contextual approaches, the study analyzes al-Aqqad's interpretation of Qur'anic verses related to women and its relevance to contemporary gender issues. The findings show that al-Aqqad promoted a moderate and progressive perspective on women. He rejected traditional interpretations that positioned women as inferior and emphasized equality between men and women in social, educational, and legal rights. According to al-Aqqad, many patriarchal interpretations of classical scholars had distorted the Qur'an's original message of justice and equality. He also argued that biological differences should not justify discrimination against women. The study concludes that al-Aqqad's thought remains relevant to modern discussions on women's rights and Islamic reform, particularly through his rational and contextual approach to interpreting the Qur'an.*

Keywords: *Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad, al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an, women in the Qur'an, contemporary tafsir, gender equality, Qur'anic hermeneutics.*

A. Introduction

The debate on women and feminism in relation to Islam is a highly dynamic debate, even movement, in Egypt. An article in *Muslim Woman and the Challenge of Islamic Extremism*, edited by Norant Othman, titled "The Challenge of Fundamentalist Muslim Movement and Women's Rights in Egypt," for example, describes how, since the 1950s, the issue of feminism has experienced ebbs and flows in line with the country's political conditions and the successive changes of power (Khafagy, 2005:29). As one of the centers of Islamic civilization in the Arab world and the seat of al-Azhar as the most important institution of Sunni Islamic learning, the issue of feminism in Egypt is crucial to examine (Elizabeth, 1998:240).

Within such dynamics, a book titled *al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an* (Women in the Qur'an) by Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad emerged in 1971. This book is interesting to study within the context of the contestation of feminist thought related to Islam in Egypt because it explicitly discusses the *ahkam al-Qur'an* (Qur'anic rulings) concerning women. From the perspective of Qur'anic exegesis methodology, the book is also "sexy" because it uses the term *fi al-Qur'an* in its title, despite the fact that Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad was not a scholar of Qur'anic studies or exegesis. Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad was a prolific literary figure and philosopher who wrote over a hundred works. Through this book, he discussed a specific concept within the Qur'an several years before the thematic method of exegesis (*al-tafsir al-mawdu'i*) was popularized by both al-Kumi and al-Farmawi. Shihab, 2007: 114).

This modest paper is a revision of a previous paper after it was presented and commented on by colleagues and the supervising lecturer of the Qur'anic Exegesis Studies course. This paper examines a work by Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad entitled *al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an*. The method used is descriptive-analytical, focusing on methodological analysis and content analysis. This revised edition provides elaboration and additional notes on the first point, concerning methodological analysis. In the methodological analysis, this paper questions whether *al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an* can be considered a book of *tafsir* (Qur'anic exegesis), and content analysis is used

to map al-Aqqad's thought within the contestation of feminist thought in Egypt.

B. Method

This study employs a qualitative, library-based research design, which is most suitable for addressing the two central research questions: whether Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad's *al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an* can be classified as a book of thematic exegesis (*tafsir mawdu'i*), and how the book positions itself within the contested landscape of feminist thought in Egypt. A qualitative approach allows for an in-depth, contextualized analysis of textual material, which is essential given that the primary data consist entirely of written sources and the research does not involve measurable variables or statistical generalization. The object of the study is al-Aqqad's *al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an* (Cairo: Nahdah Misr, 1971), examined within the historical and intellectual context of Egyptian feminism from the 1950s to the 1970s. The primary source is supplemented by secondary materials, including classical and contemporary works of *tafsir* methodology (such as al-Farmawi, 1994; Shihab, 2007; Mustaqim, 2008; Saeed, 2006), feminist exegesis (Wadud, 1999), and socio-historical studies on Egyptian feminism (Engineer, 2007; Fernea, n.d.; Khafagy, n.d.; Hatem, 1996; Badran, 1995).

Data collection was carried out through documentation and systematic textual reading, focusing on two analytical foci: methodological analysis and content analysis. For the methodological analysis, the study applied al-Farmawi's seven-step framework for thematic exegesis (1994: 45) and Abdullah Saeed's critical model (2006: 150) to assess al-Aqqad's selection of verses, use of *munāsabah* (verse correlation), handling of *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation), and reliance on historical sources versus traditional exegetical tools. For the content analysis, key passages from *al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an* were coded to map al-Aqqad's stance on gender superiority, women's public and domestic roles, and his critiques of secular feminism, then compared with the positions of Huda Sharawi, Zaynab Ghazali, and Amina Wadud. The data analysis proceeded in three stages: first, a descriptive stage that summarized the book's chapter structure and

arguments; second, an evaluative stage that assessed methodological consistency using the established frameworks; and third, an interpretive stage that situated al-Aqqad's thought within the binary of secular versus Islamist feminism. This study did not involve human or animal participants and therefore did not require ethical approval. However, all data were collected and cited in accordance with standard academic integrity principles, and all quoted materials are properly attributed to their original sources.

B. Discussion

Al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an as a Book of Tafsir

Al-Aqqad identifies three main problems related to women, with all other issues stemming from these. The three problems are: (1) the natural disposition (*ṭabī'ī*) of women, (2) their rights and obligations towards family and society, and (3) the ethics (*al-akhlāq*) of social interaction (*mu'āmalah*). Al-Aqqad states that he had discussed these three issues in various previous publications, but in *al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an*, he uses the perspective of *aḥkām al-Qur'an* (Qur'anic rulings). He claims that the Qur'an has explained these three matters in detail, and on each side one can find explanations and conclusions that serve as guidance for recurring events (al-Aqqad, 1971: 3-4).

The nature of women as explained by the Qur'an is the fundamental nature with which they were created; the nature with which women live alongside their families and offspring. The rights and obligations of women as explained by the Qur'an have corrected the errors of ancient civilizations and placed women at a rank never before achieved, nor will it be matched by subsequent civilizations, because modern civilization has actually degraded women further. Meanwhile, the ethics of social interaction for women are based on humanity, which rests on justice and nobility. It is evident that al-Aqqad not only interprets Qur'anic verses concerning women, but has also discovered the Qur'an's basic view of women.

At first glance, al-Aqqad appears to be doing thematic exegesis (*tafsīr mawḍū'ī*), considering that he collects verses on a single theme, namely women. Nashiruddin Baidan considers *al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an* as one

example of thematic exegesis (Shihab, 2007: 114). Abdul Mustaqim divides thematic study of the Qur'an into four forms (Mustaqim, 2014: 61-62). The first is *sūrah*-thematic, which assumes that each *surah* must have one major theme, as developed by al-Farahi/al-Islahi, Muhammad al-Ghazali, or the orientalist Angelika Neuwirth. The second he calls term-thematic, which studies specific terms in the Qur'an such as *al-fitnah*, *al-kitāb*, and other terms. The third is conceptual-thematic, discussing concepts not explicitly mentioned by the Qur'an but whose core idea can be derived from it, such as disability in the Qur'an. The last is figure-thematic, which bases the study on a particular figure. From the title of his book, al-Aqqad seems to be doing the second model, i.e., discussing a specific term in the Qur'an, namely the term *al-mar'ah* (woman). However, upon opening the book and flipping through its pages, it quickly becomes clear that he does not focus on that term at all. Rather, he is closer to conceptual-thematic, even though the condition that the concept is not mentioned in the Qur'an is not fulfilled.

Unlike Nashiruddin Baidan, Quraish Shihab does not recognize this book *al-Mar'ah fī al-Qur'an* as a work of *tafsīr*. He only places al-Aqqad's writing, alongside his other work entitled *al-Insān fī al-Qur'an*, as writings about the Qur'an that inspired the emergence of the thematic method of exegesis (*al-tafsīr al-mawḍū'ī*) (Shihab, 2007: 114). According to Quraish Shihab, the thematic method was pioneered by Ahmad Sayyid al-Kumi in 1981. The attribution to al-Kumi seems to be in the context of practice, while adequate and structured methodological studies had already been conducted by Abd al-Hay al-Farmawi in 1977 (al-Farmawi, 1994: 45). Historically, Quraish Shihab's explanation above is reasonable because *al-Mar'ah fī al-Qur'an* itself was published six years earlier, in 1971.

Beyond historical rationalization, Quraish Shihab's assessment also stimulates a methodological examination of al-Aqqad's work. This examination will proceed in two directions. First, regarding the function of the verses that al-Aqqad writes in his book; and second, the extent to which his method can be called thematic (*mawḍū'ī*). The first question relates to the phenomenon that not every writing that quotes verses or hadiths can be categorized as a book of *tafsīr*. This is what underlies Islah Gusmian, for

example, to limit his academic problem in his thesis to works that make Qur'anic verses the focus of study to be explained, not as direct justification (Gusmian, 2003: 11). This limitation becomes important, because otherwise, Friday bulletins or religious novels such as *Ayat-ayat Cinta* would also be called books of *tafsir*.

In the first and second chapters, al-Aqqad does what a *mufasssir* (exegete) should do when writing a *tafsir*. He groups the verses that are the main topic and then examines them. The first chapter he entitles *al-Rijāl 'alayhinna Darajah* (Men are one degree above women), and he collects three verses: al-Baqarah: 224, al-Nisa': 22 and 24. After that, he explains that the word *qawwāmūn* has two meanings: men are stronger than women by primordial nature (*fiṭrah*), and because God obliges them to support women financially. This obligation itself refers to two things: God's command and because men are stronger than women (al-Aqqad, 1971: 53). The same method is continued by al-Aqqad in the second and third chapters, but not in the fourth and fifth chapters. While the verses that form the epistemic center of the study are shown in the first three chapters, in the fourth chapter no Qur'anic verses are found that he explains, and in the fifth chapter, he writes five verses in the middle of a long discussion about the role of women. Strangely, the verses he quotes are not about the role of women, but about God's forgiveness of eternal curse (*la'nah al-khaṭī'ah al-abadiyyah*) related to the story of Adam and Eve's descent from Paradise (al-Aqqad, 1971: 48). That verse only appears as a supplementary quotation to the idea he wants to convey.

The second question will be answered by investigating what al-Aqqad does methodologically. Al-Farmawi explains that there are seven steps a *mufasssir* must take to interpret the Qur'an (al-Farmawi, 1994: 45). First, he must determine the problem to be studied. Second, trace and collect the verses related to the problem. Third, arrange the verses chronologically. Fourth, know the correlation between verses (*munāsabah*). Fifth, arrange the discussion themes in a systematic framework. Sixth, complete the discussion with hadiths, if necessary. And seventh, conduct

an in-depth thematic analysis involving *mabāḥith al-alfāz* (lexical studies), historical analysis, and other common elements in *tafsīr*.

Of the seven steps above, al-Aqqad has done the first by choosing *al-mar'ah* as the material object of his study. Furthermore, he breaks this theme down into a number of sub-themes which he arranges into the book's structure. Al-Aqqad is somewhat problematic on the second step, because, as stated in the first investigation, he is inconsistent in selecting the verses that he chooses for the theme to be discussed. There is no indication that he arranges the verses chronologically, nor does he involve the *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation) of the verses he discusses. Al-Aqqad does perform *munāsabah*. However, al-Aqqad speaks more about extra-Qur'anic matters than adequately examining the *munāsabah* between words or verses. In fact, key words individually, without involving *munāsabah*, are not even discussed in depth. It is understandable that the *munāsabah* aspect is not much explored by al-Aqqad. Hadiths are also not extensively used by al-Aqqad. Finally, all of this he has laid out in a systematic framework.

The explanation above shows that al-Farmawī's methodological steps are not fulfilled by al-Aqqad, even on the most crucial points such as verse selection, *munāsabah*, and in-depth thematic analysis. Using the thematic *tafsīr* perspective of Abdullah Saeed, which is a development of Fazlur Rahman's method, al-Aqqad only passes the first step (verse collection) and does not complete the second step, particularly the side of critical analysis linguistically, in terms of literary context, and literary form (Saeed, 2006: 150). Thus, to claim that *al-Mar'ah fī al-Qur'an* by Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad has ideally carried out the thematic method of exegesis remains problematic. This also seems to be why Quraish Shihab only places it as a work that inspired the birth of thematic *tafsīr* (Shihab, 2007: 114).

There is still more to discuss from a methodological perspective in al-Aqqad's *tafsīr*. Al-Aqqad's explanation in *al-Mar'ah fī al-Qur'an* is lengthy for just one or two verses. His method raises a question: what are the sources of exegesis (*maṣādir al-tafsīr*) that he uses? The most dominant source of exegesis used by al-Aqqad is history. However, history here is not the historical analysis known in '*Ulūm al-Qur'an*, namely *asbāb al-nuzūl*, but

a broader context using social history. On several occasions, he appears to convey his ideas using history drawn from far back, such as Greek history as he does when discussing the role of women (al-Aqqad, 1971: 125-137), even back to the history of the father of mankind. For example, to explain that men have an advantage over women, he states:

“The Qur’anic law that honors men above women is a law that has been very clear throughout the history of Adam’s children; from before human civilization existed until after it. In every nation at every time, men and women have different abilities to perform human activities, whether activities performed together, or activities specific to women” (al-Aqqad, 1971: 5).

Al-Aqqad also refers to the interpretations of *mufasssirūn* as one source of his exegetical data. For example, in interpreting the phrase *hādhihi al-shajarah* (this tree), al-Aqqad quotes two *mufasssirūn*, al-Ṭabarī and al-Ālūsī (al-Aqqad, 1971: 19-20). Moreover, when explaining the verse about *nushūz* (disobedience), al-Aqqad quotes the opinions of *mufasssirūn* across time, ranging from al-Ṭabarī, al-Zamakhsharī, al-Qurṭubī, to Ṭanṭāwī Jawharī, even including the *tafsīr* of Imam Nawawī al-Bantanī whom he refers to as Shaykh al-Jāwī (al-Aqqad, 1971: 5). Not only that, he also uses intertextuality between the Qur’an and the Torah. Explaining the phrase *al-shajarah* (the tree), he quotes chapter three of the Book of Genesis and several parts of the New Testament: the Book of Corinthians (Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians) and the Book of Timothy (first-century Christian bishop) (al-Aqqad, 1971: 19-20). He quotes *tafsīr* works from all ages to show that the Qur’an functions for humanity across time, and he quotes the Old or New Testament to show that the explanation of women from age to age has been explained by each religion.

Beyond that, there are common sources of *tafsīr* used by *mufasssirūn* that al-Aqqad does not use. Al-Aqqad does not use word-meaning analysis as shown by al-Farrā’ or al-Iṣfahānī. He also does not consider *qirā’āt* (variant readings), which are also common in *tafsīr* books. Regarding *asbāb al-nuzūl*, as stated earlier, he prefers to conduct a more macro historical

study: social history or the history of human civilization. All of this seems to be additional reasons for Quraish Shihab's objection to calling *al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an* a thematic *tafsir*.

Understood more fundamentally, by stating that *al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an* is a writing *about* the Qur'an, one could even interpret that Quraish Shihab also does not call this book a *tafsir* book. That al-Aqqad has interpreted verses, in a broad sense, is true. However, whether his book *al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an*, even though its title uses the term *fi al-Qur'an*, deserves to be called a book of *tafsir*, remains problematic (Mustaqim, 2008: 5). If previously it was concluded that the term *thematic* is only appropriate to be attached in the context of systematization but problematic in the context of methodology, then the various other deficiencies in terms of sources of *tafsir* and depth of analysis further weigh against calling this book a book of *tafsir*. It is more adequate to call this book, as Quraish Shihab does, a book about the Qur'an. In Abdul Mustaqim's language, as a process, al-Aqqad has performed interpretation, but as a product, calling *al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an* a book of *tafsir* is inadequate (Mustaqim, 2008: 5).

Nevertheless, Quraish Shihab's assessment is somewhat exclusive as a follower of the thematic model developed by al-Azhar. Because before al-Kūmī and al-Farmāwī, the writings of Amīn al-Khūlī had actually also discussed thematic *tafsir* (Khulli & Abu Zayd, 2004: 150), as applied by Nasr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd and Bint al-Shāṭi' in *Tafsir al-Bayānī li al-Qur'an* or *al-Qur'an wa Qaḍāyā al-Insān* (Ichwan, 2003: 104). Fazlur Rahman also emphasized the importance of thematic *tafsir*; among those who developed Fazlur Rahman's thematic method are Amīna Wadūd Muḥsin and Abdullah Saeed. Furthermore, the embryo of thematic *tafsir* had already been opened in medieval *tafsir* such as *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Aẓīm* by Ibn Kathīr (Ibn Kathīr, 2000). In that *tafsir*, Ibn Kathīr breaks down *sūrahs* into groups of consecutive verses. This grouping is done because each group is considered to have one common message. Currently, the thematic method has developed into a number of non-uniform variants.

From the perspective of methodological analytical strength, *al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an* by al-Aqqad has weaknesses as presented above. Compared to

the thematic method developed by Bint al-Shāṭi', Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, Abdullah Saeed, and Amīna Wadūd, al-Aqqad's work is certainly less sophisticated methodologically. However, it should be noted that al-Aqqad has discussed the Qur'anic verses about women in this book along with all matters related to them. Therefore, the term *thematic* is still relevant to attach to this book in the sense given by Islah Gusmian (Gusmian, 2003: 119-120), namely as a systematics: al-Aqqad presents the systematics of his study of *al-mar'ah* in the Qur'an in a thematic form.

Al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an in the Context of the Feminist Movement in Egypt

The feminist movement in Egypt must be understood through the role of Muhammad Abduh. According to Ashgar Ali Engineer, the genealogy of the emergence of women's liberation thought in Abduh cannot be separated from the context of European colonization in Egypt. Under the influence of Jamaluddin al-Afghani, Abduh fiercely opposed Western colonialism and instilled socio-religious dynamism and the importance of modern education for Islamic society, including women (Engineer, 2007: 181-183). Abduh's struggle was also continued by Haykal through his novels (Engineer, 2007: 181-183). Unlike Engineer, Elizabeth Warnock Fernea states that the feminist movement in Egypt was initiated by Huda Sharawi, the founder of the first Egyptian Feminist Union, when she boldly removed her veil upon returning from the International Women's Conference in Rome (Fernea, n.d.: 241). Sharawi's bold move became the seed for the development of a secular feminist movement in Egypt.

Zaynab Ghazali, a former follower of Huda Sharawi, formed her own movement, the Muslim Women's Organization (Khafagy, n.d.: 38). In an interview in 1981, Ghazali stated that Huda Sharawi's campaign was misguided; women should be called towards Islam. The primary and sacred duty of women is to be mothers and wives; they must not neglect this priority. Fatma Khafagy categorizes Zaynab Ghazali as an extremist, opposing both secular feminists and Islamist feminists (Khafagy, n.d.: 38). Khafagy distinguishes between extremists and Islamic feminism; however,

this distinction refers to fanaticism. This paper identifies both as belonging to a single group. These two figures, Huda Sharawi and Zaynab Ghazali, according to Fernea, represent two opposing feminist movements in Egypt (Fernea, n.d.: 241).

The secular feminist movement adopted a political strategy later known as state feminism. State feminism aimed to create change for women, both in the productive and reproductive sectors. Their efforts were closely related to political attempts to eliminate structural inequality between men and women. State feminism also opened opportunities for women to actively engage in the political and economic spheres (Hatem, 1996: 172-173). The 1950s and 1960s recorded remarkable achievements from this movement. In 1956, a law was issued guaranteeing equality between men and women and opposing discrimination on the basis of gender, race, language, belief, and religion. This law was practically supported by Law No. 14 of 1964, which guaranteed employment opportunities for all secondary school graduates, both male and female. This law also prohibited companies from dismissing women on maternity or childbirth leave (Hatem, 1996: 173).

Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad was a prolific Egyptian writer and literary figure. He was not a *mufasssir* (Qur'anic exegete), yet the political landscape and women's movement from the 1950s to the 1960s seemed to interest him. For this reason, he engaged in writing *al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an*. As a literary figure (not an exegete—and the problems with his exegesis have been discussed above), he turned out to be affiliated with the second group, the Islamist feminists (Badran, 1995: 107). Al-Aqqad's interest in women's issues was not limited to *al-Mar'ah fi al-Islam* (Women in Islam), as he acknowledged in the introduction; he had written on the theme of women in other publications. He was a contributor to *al-Misriah* magazine, a magazine initiated by Huda Sharawi's group. This is an interesting record for both parties, both *al-Misriah* magazine and al-Aqqad himself. *Al-Misriah* was a secular feminist medium, while al-Aqqad was affiliated with traditionalist/Islamic feminists. In fact, *al-Misriah* was open to writers from the traditionalist group, because besides involving Bint al-Shāṭi' and

Husain Haykal, *al-Misriah* also involved Shaykh Shafā'ī Labbān, Muhammad ad al-Mulla, and Hasan Ibrahim Hasan (all traditionalist figures) (Badran, 1995: 107). For al-Aqqad, this shows that as a literary figure affiliated with traditionalists, he was also open to feminist ideas.

Al-Aqqad's affiliation with Islamist feminism is evident in the content of *al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an*. In the realm of Qur'anic exegesis, using Abdullah Saeed's terminology, *al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an* belongs to the textualist group, which interprets verses based on the literal wording of the text (Saeed, 2006: 1). Meanwhile, in Amina Wadud's view, this group treats Qur'anic verses in a traditionalist manner, i.e., interpreting the Qur'an atomistically and literally (Wadud, 1999: 2). Although al-Aqqad abandoned the atomistic approach, he did not abandon the literal reading.

Al-Aqqad explicitly acknowledges that men are superior to women, as seen in the way he interprets the word *qawwāmūn* to have two meanings: men are stronger than women by primordial nature (*fiṭrah*) (al-Aqqad, 1971: 5-7). This view of al-Aqqad immediately drew criticism from Amina Wadud Muhsin. Wadud accused al-Aqqad of creating negative attributes for women by analyzing the verse incorrectly (Wadud, 1999: 35). She rejects al-Aqqad's view that by nature men are superior to women (Wadud, 1999: 35). She also rejects al-Aqqad's identification of women with the term *al-kayd* (plotting/scheming), because this word is also used in relation to men and even to God, Wadud asserts (Wadud, 1999: 99).

Al-Aqqad opposes the feminist movement. He opposes campaigns that call for women to engage in male activities. Al-Aqqad states that feminists have shallow thinking when they call for women to perform male activities. For al-Aqqad, such campaigns are an influence of materialist philosophy (al-Aqqad, 1971: 6). Furthermore, al-Aqqad states that the struggle of secular feminism is not based on humanity, but on economics. The emergence of feminist activism in the West was an effect of the Industrial Revolution. This activism sought freedom for women not for the sake of gender equality, but for industrial interests (al-Aqqad, 1971: 139). Although he does not state it directly, it was the enactment of the 1964 law that formed the background for al-Aqqad's opinion.

Nevertheless, al-Aqqad also acknowledges that women have equality with men. This equality is in terms of rights and obligations. Men and women are two inseparable types because of mutual rights and obligations. Men and women relate cooperatively, not in contestation or competition. The difference between the two sexes is not opposition, but a difference in roles. Women are responsible for domestic tasks and education that prepares the future generation, and this is a noble task, not inferior. Meanwhile, men are responsible for the public sphere (al-Aqqad, 1971: 141). There is no doubt that women can perform men's tasks. However, that must not make them neglect their primary task. Likewise, there is no doubt that men can perform domestic tasks, but without neglecting their primary responsibilities (al-Aqqad, 1971: 141).

D. Conclusion

This paper has examined Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad's *al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an* within the dynamic context of feminist discourse in Egypt, focusing on two main aspects: methodological status as a work of *tafsir* and its ideological positioning within the spectrum of Egyptian feminism. From a methodological perspective, although al-Aqqad's book is often cited as an early example of thematic exegesis (*tafsir mawdu'i*) (Shihab, 2007: 114; Baidan in Shihab, 2007: 114), a closer analysis reveals significant shortcomings. Al-Aqqad fails to consistently apply the core steps of thematic interpretation as outlined by al-Farmawi (1994: 45), such as systematic verse collection, attention to *munāsabah* (verse correlation), and the use of *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation). His reliance on macro-social history over traditional exegetical tools, his literal reading of key terms like *qawwāmūn*, and his inconsistent use of Qur'anic verses – especially in later chapters – undermine the claim that *al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an* qualifies as a proper book of *tafsir* (Mustaqim, 2008: 5). Instead, following Quraish Shihab (2007: 114), it is more adequately described as a book *about* the Qur'an that inspired later thematic approaches, rather than a methodologically rigorous thematic exegesis.

In terms of its ideological affiliation, al-Aqqad aligns clearly with Islamist feminism, as represented by figures like Zaynab Ghazali, in

opposition to the secular state feminism pioneered by Huda Sharawi (Fernea, n.d.: 241; Khafagy, n.d.: 38). His work defends male superiority based on primordial nature (*fiṭrah*) (al-Aqqad, 1971: 5-7), rejects secular feminist campaigns as economically driven and materialistic (al-Aqqad, 1971: 6, 139), and insists on complementary gender roles where women's primary duties remain domestic and educational, while men dominate the public sphere (al-Aqqad, 1971: 141). At the same time, al-Aqqad acknowledges a form of equality in rights and obligations, arguing for cooperation rather than competition between the sexes. His view has been sharply criticized by later feminist exegetes such as Amina Wadud (1999: 35, 99), who reject his literal and traditionalist reading of Qur'anic verses on women.

Finally, al-Aqqad's involvement with *al-Misriah* magazine – a secular feminist platform – demonstrates a complex intellectual openness. Despite his traditionalist affiliation, he was willing to engage with secular feminist discourse, reflecting the dynamic and non-binary nature of feminist contestation in Egypt (Badran, 1995: 107). In summary, while *al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an* is methodologically insufficient as a work of *tafsir*, it remains a significant document of Islamist feminist thought in 1970s Egypt, offering a traditionalist yet dialogical voice within the broader struggle over women's rights and Islamic interpretation.

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