



## **REVISITING PROPHET NOAH: APPLYING A HISTORICAL CRITICAL LENS TO ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS NARRATIVES IN INDONESIA**

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### **Abstract**

This study offers a historical-critical reinterpretation of the age of Prophet Noah, challenging the conventional understanding of his 950-year lifespan. Moving beyond predominantly normative and theological approaches in Indonesian scholarship, this research advances an interdisciplinary framework that integrates historical context and numerical analysis. By situating the narrative within the Sumerian cultural milieu and examining the possibility of a quinary numerical system, the study proposes that Noah's age more plausibly corresponds to approximately 75 years prior to the great flood. This reinterpretation constitutes the central theoretical contribution of the study, providing a critical lens for reassessing Qur'anic narratives beyond literalist readings. The findings also indicate that the narrative has been predominantly employed as a medium for moral instruction, reinforcing its pedagogical function in Islamic discourse. By bridging classical exegetical traditions with contemporary analytical approaches, this research opens new avenues for contextual and interdisciplinary studies of religious texts. The study thus contributes to the development of more nuanced methodologies in Islamic scholarship and encourages further exploration of external historical sources in interpreting scriptural narratives.

**Keywords:** historical-critical, Indonesia, islamic studies, narrative, Noah.



## INTRODUCTION

The Holy Qur'an, although not a book of history, contains a great deal of historical information that recounts the lives of ancient peoples, even thousands of years before it was revealed. One of the most frequently mentioned narratives in the Qur'an is the story of Prophet Noah ('Alayhi al-Salām) and his people. The Qur'an recounts the story of Noah in several surahs, including Surah Nuh (71), Surah Hud (11), and Surah Al-A'raf (7). The accounts of Noah appear in passages such as Surah 11:25–49, Surah 21:76–77, Surah 23:23–30, Surah 26:105–121, Surah 29:14–15, Surah 37:75–82, Surah 54:9–16, and Surah 71:1–28. The story of the prophet Noah has been discussed by many interfaith experts, including Valentina V.<sup>1</sup> which explains Prophet Noah (AS) and his connection to the great flood which is so deeply rooted in the collective memory of mankind that it is reported in the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Epic of Atrahasis, the Epic of Ziusudra and other ancient texts. It contains profound lessons about perseverance, patience, faith, and obedience to the commands of Allah.

Prophet Noah ('Alayhi al-Salām) is one of the messengers most frequently mentioned in the Holy Qur'an and forms an integral part of the Islamic literary tradition. His story carries not only theological and moral significance but also plays an important role in the narrative and pedagogical construction of various forms of Islamic writing. According to the historian Ibn al-Athīr, Mosul was the dwelling place of Noah, a claim supported by the discovery of thick layers of silt deep in the soil during excavations in that region, as well as by Sumerian inscriptions indicating that the great flood occurred in Mesopotamia. When these historical accounts are combined, it becomes evident that Noah's dwelling place was Mesopotamia and that his lifetime coincided with the Sumerian period. The Sumerians built a great civilization that exerted significant religious and cultural influence over neighboring regions, including Arabia [1].

In Indonesia, the story of Prophet Noah is generally known through religious sources such as the Holy Qur'an, Hadith, and classical tafsir (exegesis) works. The Islamic literary tradition, which has developed from the classical to the contemporary period, frequently features the stories of prophets as a medium for da'wah, education, and the formation of Islamic identity including the story of Prophet Noah. In local Islamic manuscripts such as *hikayat*, *tabaqat*, Malay-language tafsir, and the works of modern Indonesian scholars, the story of Noah is consistently associated with his extraordinarily long lifespan of 950 years, the great global flood, and his ability to save the believers from this catastrophic event. This narrative has continually been used to illustrate the struggle of prophetic da'wah, the test of faith, and the importance of steadfastness in the face of societal rejection of the divine message [2]. This story has been used not only to instill spiritual values but also to convey subtle social and political messages, particularly during the colonial period and the formative stages of Indonesian Islamic identity.

Despite the richness of these narrative traditions, a significant epistemological gap remains insufficiently addressed in Indonesian Islamic studies. Existing scholarship has been predominantly shaped by normative-theological approaches that emphasize doctrinal affirmation,



moral instruction, and the preservation of classical exegetical authority. While such approaches are valuable for maintaining continuity within the Islamic intellectual tradition, they often limit critical engagement with the historical dimensions of Qur'anic narratives. In contrast, historical-critical analysis widely developed in broader religious and textual studies remains marginal and underutilized in the Indonesian context. This absence is particularly evident in discussions surrounding the age of Prophet Noah, which continues to be accepted in a literalist manner without systematic examination of its possible historical, cultural, and numerical contexts. Consequently, there is a lack of analytical frameworks capable of interrogating the narrative beyond its theological function. By explicitly contrasting the dominance of normative-theological interpretations with the scarcity of historical-critical inquiry, this study positions itself within a clear research gap and seeks to advance a more critical, contextual, and interdisciplinary understanding of Qur'anic narratives.

Although the story of Prophet Noah ('Alayhi al-Salām) is one of the most significant and frequently repeated narratives in the Holy Qur'an and has subsequently been retold by numerous Indonesian religious writers, academic studies in Indonesia that employ a historical-critical approach to this story remain very limited. The historical-critical approach seeks to understand religious texts within the historical and cultural contexts in which they emerged, tracing possible historical sources, editorial structures, and the social background of the communities that received the revelation. Unfortunately, this approach has not been widely applied in Indonesian Islamic studies, where interpretations of prophetic narratives in the Qur'an, particularly the story of Noah, are still dominated by theological and normative exegetical perspectives.

This study seeks to complement earlier research that has generally examined the story of Prophet Noah from theological and normative interpretive perspectives. It addresses three key questions: (1) How is the narrative structure of the story of Noah represented in Indonesian Islamic scholarship? (2) How is the narrative of Noah's age positioned and understood within Indonesian Islamic studies? and (3) How can the historical-critical approach offer new perspectives in understanding the story of Noah? The answers to these questions are expected to provide more accurate information and new insights into the historical narrative of Prophet Noah ('Alayhi al-Salām).

## **LITERATURE REVIEWS AND METHODOLOGY**

The study of Prophet Noah's story in Islamic literature has long been an integral part of Qur'anic exegesis, particularly in understanding the narrative function and theological value of the stories of the prophets (*qashash al-aniyā*). In classical tafsir, the narrative of Prophet Noah is positioned as an example of the struggle for *da'wah* of monotheism, the patience of a messenger, and the manifestation of divine justice upon a disbelieving people.

The development of contemporary Qur'anic studies shows a shift in approach from a normative and doctrinal orientation toward a more historical, literary, and contextual analysis. Saleh (2020) in his study on the formation of the classical tafsir tradition, argues that a



contextual understanding of the Qur'anic text requires an integration of linguistic, historical, and anthropological analyses. This aligns with the perspective of Rahman, who offers a hermeneutical approach to the Holy Qur'an that integrates textual analysis with social context in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of divine revelation.[3]

In modern academic discourse, the historical-critical approach has begun to be applied to the study of prophetic narratives, including the story of Prophet Noah, as part of an effort to understand intertextuality and the narrative construction of sacred texts. Mourad, emphasizes the importance of the context of revelation and the cultural background of the communities that received the revelation in interpreting the stories of the Holy Qur'an.[4] This approach allows for an analysis of possible narrative interactions between the Qur'anic text and earlier religious literatures, such as the Book of Genesis and Mesopotamian mythology.[5]

The study by Pfof (2014) shows that the narrative of Prophet Noah in the Holy Qur'an possesses a strong thematic structure, reflecting a narrative pattern that reinforces the prophetic mission of Hadrat Muhammad Rasulullah Khatam un Nabiyyin (peace and blessings be upon him and his family and companions). The collective rejection of the doctrine of monotheism and the warnings of divine punishment emerge as central themes, repeatedly highlighted across several surahs such as Surah Nūḥ, Surah Hūd, and Surah Al-Syu'arā'.[6]

The literary approach they employ suggests that this story functions not merely as a historical account but also as a powerful rhetorical tool for shaping the spiritual consciousness of the early Muslim community.

In Indonesia, studies on the story of Prophet Noah are still largely dominated by normative and theological approaches, as reflected in various works on Qur'anic exegesis and Islamic education. Fakhruddin for instance, emphasizes the importance of developing a historical approach in Qur'anic studies to promote more critical and academically relevant readings. However, the use of the historical-critical method in local scholarship remains relatively limited, due both to epistemological constraints and resistance toward approaches perceived as overly "Western."

Thus, this study seeks to fill the gap in the literature concerning the application of the historical-critical approach to the story of Prophet Noah within the context of Indonesian Islamic studies. It not only contributes a new perspective to the analysis of Qur'anic texts but also opens a methodological dialogue between classical exegetical traditions and contemporary scientific approaches.

### **3. Methods**

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research design to analyze the story of Prophet Noah as represented in the Holy Qur'an, using the framework of the historical-critical method. The historical-critical approach emphasizes the investigation of context, sources,



and the evolution of the text. It is applied to examine religious texts contextually by taking into account the historical background, the socio-cultural dynamics of the society at the time of revelation, and the possible existence of narrative constructions influenced by broader traditions, including narratives found in ancient Hebrew and Mesopotamian traditions.<sup>2</sup>

In this study, historical-critical analysis was conducted in two main stages. First, source analysis was carried out by tracing the verses that represent the story of Prophet Noah in the Holy Qur'an, and how these verses are understood in the context of the narrative of Prophet Noah. Second, the process of tracing data sources used Google Scholar through Publish or Perish, with five keywords, namely, 'Prophet Noah's flood', 'Prophet Noah's age', 'Prophet Noah's preaching', 'Prophet Noah's ark'. The data searched for was specific studies on Prophet Noah, written by Indonesian Muslim authors from 2017 to 2024. More than 200 writings related to the story of Prophet Noah were found. After selecting and evaluating these studies, 35 academic articles were found that focused primarily on Prophet Noah. The rest were writings about the story of Prophet Noah in the form of theses and dissertations published through repositories, e-theses, digital libraries, or writings that only briefly mentioned Prophet Noah. The 35 selected journal articles are as follows:

**Table 1.** Journal Articles on Prophet Noah in Indonesian Islamic Studies

No	Authors	Titles	Journals/ Sources
1	Jihan, Chairunnisa, Siti Ardianti	Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Islam Dalam Kisah Nabi Nuh A.S (Islamic Educational Values in the Story of Prophet Noah (A.S.))	<a href="https://dirosat.com/index.php/i/article/view/9">https://dirosat.com/index.php/i/article/view/9</a>
2	Ahmad Farhan Coirullah	Nilai-nilai religius dalam kisah perjuangan dakwah nabi nuh as perspektif The Holy Qur'an (Religious Values in the Story of Prophet Noah's Preaching Struggle from the Perspective of The Holy Qur'an)	<a href="https://doi.org/10.32332/ath_thariq.v4i1.1667">https://doi.org/10.32332/ath_thariq.v4i1.1667</a>
3	Fatimah Zuhriah, Fatwiah Noor, Sahibul Ardi	Adversity Quotient (AQ) in the stories of prophet noah (pbuh) and prophet abraham (pbuh): an islamic education perspective	<a href="https://jurnal.maarifnumalang.id/index.php/mjemias/index">https://jurnal.maarifnumalang.id/index.php/mjemias/index</a>
4	Nurul Indiana	Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Islam (Analisis Buku Misteri Banjir Nabi Nuh Karya Yosep Rafiqi) (Islamic Educational Values: An	<a href="https://jurnal.stituwjombang.ac.id/index.php/ilmuna/article/view/152">https://jurnal.stituwjombang.ac.id/index.php/ilmuna/article/view/152</a>



No	Authors	Titles	Journals/ Sources
		Analysis of the Book <i>Misteri Banjir Nabi Nuh</i> by Yosep Rafiqi)	
5	Alyzaki	Bencana Alam Perspektif The Holy Qur'an Analisis Kisah Nabi Nuh, Nabi Hud dan Nabi Luth (Kajian Tematik) (Natural Disasters from the Perspective of The Holy Qur'an: A Thematic Analysis of the Stories of Prophet Noah, Prophet Hud, and Prophet Lot)	<a href="https://jurnal.radenfatah.ac.id/index.php/almisykah/article/view/7441">https://jurnal.radenfatah.ac.id/index.php/almisykah/article/view/7441</a>
6	Qanita Nurshabrina	Dakwah Nabi Nuh 'Alaihissalam: Studi Tafsir Tematik Dakwah Nabi Nuh dalam Surat Nuh (The Prophethood of Noah ('Alayhis-Salām): A Thematic Exegesis Study of Noah's Preaching in Surah Nuh)	<a href="https://ojs.stiudq.ac.id/JUQDQ/article/view/9/6">https://ojs.stiudq.ac.id/JUQDQ/article/view/9/6</a>
7	M. Kautsar Thariq Syah Putri Lailatus Sa'adah	Disaster Management and Lessons from the Story of Prophet Noah: Integrating Structural and Non-Structural Approaches in Addressing Flood Risks	<a href="https://journal.uinsgd.ac.id/index.php/definisi/article/view/32438">https://journal.uinsgd.ac.id/index.php/definisi/article/view/32438</a>
8	Wafa haifan Anur, Radif Khotamir Rusli	Pendekatan Filsafat Pendidikan dalam Mengenalkan Keteladanan Kisah Nabi Nuh kepada Siswa Sekolah Dasar (Philosophical Education Approach in Introducing the Exemplary Story of Prophet Noah to Elementary School Students)	<a href="https://ojs.unida.ac.id/karimahtauhid/article/view/17549">https://ojs.unida.ac.id/karimahtauhid/article/view/17549</a>
9	Auliya Adhli	Hikmah kisah nabi nuh as. dalam The Holy Qur'an (The Wisdom	<a href="https://jurnal.stain-madina.ac.id/index.php/alkaun">https://jurnal.stain-madina.ac.id/index.php/alkaun</a>



No	Authors	Titles	Journals/ Sources
		of the Story of Prophet Noah (AS) in The Holy Qur'an)	<a href="#">iyah/article/view/368</a>
10	Auliya Adhli	Ilmu pengetahuan dan teknologi perkapalan pada kisah nabi nuh menurut perspektif alquran dan hadis (Knowledge and Shipbuilding Technology in the Story of Prophet Noah According to the Qur'an and Hadith)	<a href="https://jurnal.stain-madina.ac.id/index.php/almutabar/article/view/607">https://jurnal.stain-madina.ac.id/index.php/almutabar/article/view/607</a>
11	Aulya Adhli	Kepastian Balasan Dari Allah yang diambil dari kisah Nabi Nuh a.s. Dalam The Holy Qur'an (The Certainty of Allah's Response Derived from the Story of Prophet Noah (AS) in The Holy Qur'an)	<a href="https://journal.universitaspahlawan.ac.id/index.php/jpdk/article/view/10210/7781">https://journal.universitaspahlawan.ac.id/index.php/jpdk/article/view/10210/7781</a>
12	Nabila Salsabila, Anisa Mohamad2, Aditya Saputra Ahmad3, Mustaqimah4	Kisah nabi nuh dalam The Holy Qur'an (The Story of Prophet Noah in The Holy Qur'an)	<a href="https://ejournal.kopertais4.or.id/madura/index.php/alqorni/article/download/6785/4600/22656">https://ejournal.kopertais4.or.id/madura/index.php/alqorni/article/download/6785/4600/22656</a>
13	Ahmad Faris Ahkam	Kisah Nabi Nuh, dalam The Holy Qur'an dan Al-Kitab (The Story of Prophet Noah in The Holy Qur'an and the Bible)	<a href="https://ejournal.iain-bone.ac.id/index.php/alwajid/article/view/3800">https://ejournal.iain-bone.ac.id/index.php/alwajid/article/view/3800</a>
14	Sufrin Efendi Lubis	Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Islam dalam Kisah Nabi Nuh, As (Islamic Educational Values in the Story of Prophet Noah (AS))	<a href="https://repo.uinsyahada.ac.id/53/1/sufrin%20efen">https://repo.uinsyahada.ac.id/53/1/sufrin%20efen</a>
15	Azkiya Khikmatiar, Ulummudin,	Kisah nabi Nuh dalam alquran: pendekatan intertekstual julia kristeva (The Story of Prophet Noah in the Qur'an: An Intertextual Approach of Julia Kristeva)	<a href="https://journal.iainlangsa.ac.id/index.php/tibyan/article/view/1144">https://journal.iainlangsa.ac.id/index.php/tibyan/article/view/1144</a>
16	Muhammad Thaib Muhammad	Kisah Nuh Dalam Perspektif The Holy Qur'an (The Story of Noah	<a href="https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348738757_kisah_n">https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348738757_kisah_n</a>



No	Authors	Titles	Journals/ Sources
		from the Perspective of The Holy Qur'an)	<a href="#">uh as dalam perspektif al-quraan</a>
17	Alfi Amalia, Andrew Satria Lubis.	Management of Nabi Nuh AS (Study of Business Strategic Planning in dealing with risks, crises and disasters in an Islamic approach.	<a href="https://talenta.usu.ac.id/jomas/article/view/11927">https://talenta.usu.ac.id/jomas/article/view/11927</a>
18	Ahmad Muslih	Menanamkan Nilai-nilai Karakter pada anak Melalui Kisah nabi Nuh as (Instilling Character Values in Children Through the Story of Prophet Noah (AS))	<a href="https://conference.uin-suka.ac.id/index.php/aciece/article/view/93">https://conference.uin-suka.ac.id/index.php/aciece/article/view/93</a>
19	Muhammad	The mystery of the drowning of kan'ān, the son of nūḥ: criticism of shahrur's thought	<a href="https://repository.uin-malang.ac.id/9753/">https://repository.uin-malang.ac.id/9753/</a>
20	Fu'adul Musthofa, Sutrisno	Meneladani cara Berdakwah Nabi Ulul Azmi Dalam The Holy Qur'an (Emulating the Da'wah Methods of the Prophets of Strong Will (Ulul Azmi) in the Holy Qur'an)	<a href="https://j-innovative.org/index.php/Innovative/article/view/7701">https://j-innovative.org/index.php/Innovative/article/view/7701</a>
21	Hidayatullah Ismail, Toto Prasetio, Moham Noven-deri, Dasman Yahya	Rasionalitas Kan'an dalam menolak dakwah nabi Nuh as perspektif The Holy Qur'an (The Rationality of Canaan in Rejecting the Da'wah of Prophet Noah (AS): A Qur'anic Perspective)	<a href="https://www.researchgate.net/publication/383203937_rasionalitas_kan'an_dalam_menolak_dakwah_nabi_nuh_as_perspektif_The_Holy_Qur'an">https://www.researchgate.net/publication/383203937_rasionalitas_kan'an_dalam_menolak_dakwah_nabi_nuh_as_perspektif_The_Holy_Qur'an</a>
22	Salfur Rahman	Story of big flood in the modern indonesian literary: an ecocriticism study	<a href="http://103.8.12.212:33180/unj/index.php/ijlecr/article/view/3644">http://103.8.12.212:33180/unj/index.php/ijlecr/article/view/3644</a>



No	Authors	Titles	Journals/ Sources
23	Umar Kustiadi	Silver lining dibalik misi kenabian nuh as (studi komparatif The Holy Qur'an dan bible) (The Silver Lining Behind the Prophetic Mission of Noah (AS): A Comparative Study of the Holy Qur'an and the Bible)	<a href="https://academicjournal.yarsi.ac.id/ojs3/index.php/rhi/article/view/148">https://academicjournal.yarsi.ac.id/ojs3/index.php/rhi/article/view/148</a>
24	Sri Wahyuni, Ari Asriadi, Hendri Tanjung, Nur Ahmani bi rahmani	Crisis navigation in business (lessons from the management of prophet nuh as)	<a href="https://e-journal.uac.ac.id/index.php/ijjse/article/view/4540">https://e-journal.uac.ac.id/index.php/ijjse/article/view/4540</a>
25	Nurfatini Zainal Abidin & Wan Mohd Khairul Firdaus Wan Khairuldin	Pre-Flood Management from Islamic Perspective: Study on the Prophet Noah in The Holy Qur'an	<a href="https://research.amanote.com/publication/i6e-AXQBKQvf0BhiTzp1/pre-flood-management-from-islamic-perspective-study-on-the-prophet-noah-in-The-Holy-Qur'an">https://research.amanote.com/publication/i6e-AXQBKQvf0BhiTzp1/pre-flood-management-from-islamic-perspective-study-on-the-prophet-noah-in-The-Holy-Qur'an</a>
26	Desma Kurniawan, Muh.Nur Rahim, Hafiz	The Tufan Nuh in Surah Al-Ankabut Perspective of Syekh Tantawi Jauhari's	<a href="https://dirasah.pdtii.org/index.php/i/article/view/37">https://dirasah.pdtii.org/index.php/i/article/view/37</a>
27	Muhammad Rusydi	Makna kisah nuh as dalam The Holy Qur'an (perspektif hermeneutika filosofis) (The Meaning of the Story of Prophet Noah (AS) in the Holy Qur'an: A Philosophical Hermeneutic Perspective)	<a href="https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317340371_makna_kisah_nuh_as_dalam_The_Holy_Qur'an_perspektif_hermeneutika_filosofis">https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317340371_makna_kisah_nuh_as_dalam_The_Holy_Qur'an_perspektif_hermeneutika_filosofis</a>
28	Salma Nur Istiqomah, Muhammad Zaka al-Farisi, Muh. Maulani	Implikasi Deiksis Persona Ayat The Holy Qur'an Kisah Nabi Nuh as, terhadap Prinsip Kesantunan Perspektif Geoffrey Leech (The Implications of Personal Deixis in the Qur'anic Verses of the Story of Prophet Noah (AS) on the Principle of Politeness: A Geoffrey Leech Perspective)	<a href="https://jer.or.id/index.php/jer/article/view/2127/1147">https://jer.or.id/index.php/jer/article/view/2127/1147</a>



No	Authors	Titles	Journals/ Sources
29	Nadila, Hamsa, St. Fauziah	Kisah Nabi Nuh as, dalam The Holy Qur'an al-Karim (kajian analisis Interinsik) (The Story of Prophet Noah (AS) in the Holy Qur'an al-Karim: An Intrinsic Analysis Study)	<a href="https://ejournal.iainpare.ac.id/index.php/syamaail/article/view/10519">https://ejournal.iainpare.ac.id/index.php/syamaail/article/view/10519</a>
30	Ahmad Adnan	Pelajaran Dakwah dari Perjalanan dan Sejarah Dakwah Nabi Nuh AS dalam Surat Nuh (Da'wah Lessons from the Journey and History of Prophet Noah's (AS) Mission in Surah Nūḥ)	<a href="https://jurnal.alhikmah.ac.id/index.php/elhikmah/article/view/57">https://jurnal.alhikmah.ac.id/index.php/elhikmah/article/view/57</a>
31	Muhammad Hakim mukhtar rijan, Mahmoud Sabtu	Metode dan intipati dakwah nabi nuh a.s : analisis dalam The Holy Qur'an (The Methods and Essence of Prophet Noah's (AS) Da'wah: An Analysis in the Holy Qur'an)	<a href="https://www.unimel.edu.my/journal/index.php/JMAW/article/view/230">https://www.unimel.edu.my/journal/index.php/JMAW/article/view/230</a>
32	Wasalmi	Kemukjizatan Ilmiah Pada Kisah Nabi Nuh As, Fir'aun & Keberadaan Manusia Di Bumi Sebelum Adam (The Scientific Miracles in the Stories of Prophet Noah (AS), Pharaoh, and the Existence of Humans on Earth Before Adam)	<a href="https://journal.aripafi.or.id/index.php/jbpai/article/view/109">https://journal.aripafi.or.id/index.php/jbpai/article/view/109</a>
33	Suriadi, Samin	Nilai-nilai Pendidikan Dalam Dakwah Nabi Nuh as (Kajian Surat Nuh) or Educational Values in the Da'wah of Prophet Noah (AS): A Study of Surah Nūḥ	<a href="https://ejournal.iainkerinci.ac.id/index.php/pik/article/view/2405">https://ejournal.iainkerinci.ac.id/index.php/pik/article/view/2405</a>
34	Zaki Zimmatillah Zulf, Zulfi Fadlur Rahman, Bima Rahman Hakim.	A New Civilization After Noah's Flood: An Exploration of the Development and Spread of Descendants to Three Continents in History and the Qur'an	<a href="https://ejournal.radenintan.ac.id/index.php/al-dzikra/article/view/26864">https://ejournal.radenintan.ac.id/index.php/al-dzikra/article/view/26864</a>



No	Authors	Titles	Journals/ Sources
35	Muhammad Mansur Abdul Haq, Muhammad Mushol.AG, Muh.Syariful Hidayat	The Three Sons of Noah Civilization Spread	<a href="https://jurnal.uinsu.ac.id/index.php/juspi/article/view/18458">https://jurnal.uinsu.ac.id/index.php/juspi/article/view/18458</a>

These 35 academic articles constitute the population and object of analysis in this research, serving as the main corpus for exploring the content related to the narrative structure of Noah’s story and the representation of his lifespan within the context of Indonesian Islamic studies, as well as the broader themes connected to these narratives.

The historical-critical analysis aims to uncover information concerning the historical accuracy of the story of Prophet Noah (‘alayhi al-salām) and to offer new perspectives in understanding the narrative — both from the standpoint of historicity and the socio-cultural context of the society in his time, as well as the transformation of this story across various traditions and literary expressions in Indonesia.

Data were collected through a comprehensive literature study involving primary sources (the Holy Qur’an and Hadith) and 35 academic articles, along with secondary sources (tafsir works, scholarly articles, and recent academic publications related to the topic). These were then analyzed using a descriptive-critical method. Through this methodology, the study seeks to contribute to the advancement of Islamic studies in Indonesia by promoting a more interdisciplinary and contextual approach, while maintaining fidelity to faith-based values and the authority of the sacred text.[7]

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. The Narrative Structure of the Story of Prophet Noah (‘Alayhi al-Salām) in Indonesian Islamic Writing

The story of Prophet Noah (‘Alayhi al-Salām) in Islamic tradition is understood not merely as a religious narrative but also as a text possessing a complex narrative structure that reflects theological, moral, and social messages. In many Indonesian literary sources, it is found that Noah (‘Alayhi al-Salām) is described as the ninth descendant of Prophet Adam (‘Alayhi al-Salām). His father was Lamik bin Mutawasyilah bin Idris. Prophet Noah is said to have lived for 950 years, as “understood” from the Holy Qur’an, Surah Al-‘Ankabut (29), verse 14. His wife was named Wafilah, and he had four sons: Shem (Syam), Ham (Khan), Japheth (Yafits), and Canaan (Kan’an). Three of his sons were saved, while one—Canaan—was drowned during the great flood for rejecting his father’s prophetic call.



According to various accounts, Prophet Noah lived around 4,000 years after the generation of Prophet Adam (AS). Prophet Noah and his people, identified as the ancient Sumerians, are believed to have lived in the valleys of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers—an area located in southern Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq), although the Holy Qur’an itself does not explicitly mention this. The biography of Prophet Noah, his da’wah mission, and the opposition of his people are mentioned across 27 surahs of the Holy Qur’an, with the name “Nuh” appearing in 42 verses in total.

The chronology of Noah’s story is outlined in the following matrix of surahs:

**Table 2.** Noah in the Holy Qur’an

No	Story	Surah	Verse
1	The Mission of Prophet Noah to His People and His Lifespan of 950 Years	Nuh (70) Al-Ankabut	1-4 14
2	The Rejection of Noah’s Message by His People and the Threat of Divine Punishment	Hud (11) Al-A’rof (7)	25-27 60-64
3	The Denial of Noah’s People and the Prayer of Prophet Noah	Al-Qomar (54)	9-10
4	The Command to Build the Ark	Hud (11)	37-39
5	The Revelation of the Flood and the Construction of the Ark	Al-mu’minun (23)	27
6	The Devastating Flood	Al-qomar (54)	11-12
7	The Story of the Flood and the Ark’s Landing	Hud (11)	40-44
8	Noah’s Prayer for His Son and Allah’s Response	Hud (11)	45-48
8	The Salvation of Prophet Noah and His Followers	Al-Ankabut (29)	15
10	The Story of Noah as a Warning for the Generations After him	Asy-Syu’ara (26)	105-122
11	The Story of Noah as a Lesson	Al-Furqon (25)	37

The narrative of Prophet Noah (AS), as developed in Indonesian academic studies, is in fact not significantly different from the chronological depiction of the verses in The Holy Qur’an, as shown in the matrix above. Generally, the narrative of Noah’s story can be divided into four main phases.

**Table 3.** Narrative Structure Matrix

No	Narative Structure	Content of the Study / Writing	Source
1	Exposition (Introduction to Characters and Conflict)	a. Introduction of Noah as a Patient Messenger of Allah b. Conflict (His People’s Rejection of Prophet Noah’s Preaching) c. Biography of Noah (AS) (Age of Prophet Noah = 950 years)	QS.Al-A’rof : 59 QS.Nuh : 5-7
2	Complication	a. Preaching and the Resistance of His	QS. Hud: 27-32



	(Climax of Tension)	People b. The Denial of Noah’s People	QS. Al-qomar 9-10
3	Climax (Divine Punishment)	The Great Flood Event: a. The Command to Build the Ark b. The Descent of the Flood Punishment (Divine Retribution) and the Warning for the Believers	QS. Hud: 37-39 QS.Al-Qomar:11-12.
4	Resolution (Conclusion of the Story)	a. The Salvation of Noah’s Followers (The Ark as Allah’s Mercy) b. Wisdom of the Story: Lessons on steadfastness, patience, divine justice, and the signs of Allah’s power	QS.Al-Ankabut : 15

The narrative structure of the story of Prophet Noah (AS) in The Holy Qur’an follows a clear pattern, namely exposition, climax, and resolution. This narrative structure is not only linear but also contains a circular pattern that reiterates the themes of patience, punishment, and mercy. Analysis of 35 articles on the story of Prophet Noah (AS) reveals highly varied content and discussions. Nevertheless, there are several common trends in the article content. The key findings of these trends are presented in the table below.

**Table 4.** Trends in Article Content

No	Trends in Article Content (Themes)	Frequency
1	The Age of Prophet Noah: 950 Years	25
2	Creed / Worship	6
3	Morals / Patience and Obedience	20
4	Da’wah	35
5	Da’wah Challenges	6
6	Natural Disaster/Flood	12
7	Shipbuilding Technology	2
8	Disaster Mitigation Technology	2
9	Integration of Science and Religion	1
10	Comparison between The Holy Qur’an and the Bible	2
11	Learning Disaster Management Strategies	1
12	Prophethood Mission / Wisdom of Noah’s Story	2



No	Trends in Article Content (Themes)	Frequency
13	The Rationality of Kan'an in Rejecting Noah's Preaching	1
14	Islamic Education	20
15	Religious Values in the Preaching of Prophet Noah	3
16	Eco-Criticism: Between Literature and the Physical Environment	1
17	Moral Message and Human Greed	1
18	Modern Indonesian Literature Adopting the Religious Story of Prophet Noah	1
19	Crisis Communication Management	1
20	Natural Disasters as Divine Punishment	8
21	Moral Crisis Management	1
22	Critique of Modern Thought Approaches to the Story of Noah	1

The matrix above explains that there are 22 types of content or themes in the 35 academic articles analyzed. There is a recurring phenomenon of content across the articles. Occasionally, a single article addresses two main research focuses. The five highest content trends show a focus on preaching (found in all 35 articles), the age of Prophet Noah—950 years (25 articles), Islamic Education and Morals (20 articles each), and content on natural disasters, which appears globally in 12 articles. This indicates a certain homogeneity in approach within Indonesian academic studies.

## 2. Critical Historical Analysis of the Study Approach

A detailed analysis of the 35 articles reveals two main issues in the study of Prophet Noah's narrative in Indonesia.

### a. Limited Use of External Sources

External sources refer to references on the story of Prophet Noah written by authors outside the Islamic tradition. As is well-known, the story of Noah is recognized across all Semitic religions, including Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, and even in Hinduism. Research on the 35 articles examined shows that only 8 articles (22.9%) utilized external sources in addition to internal references. However, among these 8 articles, only 4 external references directly address the story of Prophet Noah; the other 4 pertain to other aspects, such as research methodology or philosophy of education. Utilizing external sources in writing about Noah not only enriches scientific knowledge but can also logically bring the narrative closer to historical facts, especially as the events occurred long before the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him).



### **b. Lack of Sumerian Cultural Context**

Some articles provide brief accounts of Prophet Noah's biography, including his people's residence in Mesopotamia, his genealogical lineage from Adam, Noah as the first prophet, his preaching activities, the building of the ark, and the great flood in his region. However, there is little to no discussion of the culture and society of the people or the geographical context in which Noah lived and preached. Out of the 35 academic articles analyzed, only 4 (11.7%) included explanations of the geographical and cultural context of Prophet Noah's life. The majority of studies did not explore his birthplace, local culture, or societal conditions. In contrast, understanding the social and cultural context of Noah and his people as mentioned in Qur'an, Surah Al-Ankabut, verse 14—is essential for comprehending the dynamics of his preaching, the veracity of the story, and the challenges he faced.

The connection of Prophet Noah with the Sumerian civilization is widely accepted, as it is considered established that the flood experienced by the Sumerians in ancient Mesopotamia coincides with the time of Prophet Noah. Historical and religious scholars estimate that Noah and his people lived in the Euphrates and Tigris valleys, which today correspond to southern Iraq, particularly Kufah, within ancient Mesopotamia—a historically rich area surrounded by mountains feeding rivers into the valleys. The people identified as Noah's followers are believed to be the Sumerians, who lived around 4000–3000 BCE.

From a historical and archaeological perspective, various sources support the presence of Prophet Noah among the Sumerians. Samuel Noah Kramer, in his article *The Sumerian*, notes that the figure Ziusudra in the Epic of Gilgamesh (Tablet XI) is the Sumerian analogue of Noah. Ziusudra is a legendary figure who survived a great flood, similar to the story of Noah in both The Holy Qur'an and the Bible.<sup>3</sup> John Baumgardner, in his article *Noah's Flood: The Key to Correct Interpretation of Earth History*, explains that his team's research uncovered geological evidence of Noah's flood in ancient Mesopotamia.<sup>4</sup> This further clarifies that the people of Noah were the Sumerians in ancient Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq), and that Noah lived and preached among them, as indicated in Qur'an, Surah Al-Ankabut, verse 14.

### **c. The Age of Prophet Noah in Indonesian Islamic Studies**

The trend in writing about the story of Prophet Noah (ʿAlayhis-Salām) in Indonesian Islamic studies consistently narrates him as one of the prophets with the longest lifespan in history. According to various accounts, he lived for 950 years. [8](Purba, 2022). In the book *Tarikh Islam*, page 6, intended for Madrasah Diniyah students, the age of Prophet Noah is stated as 950 years. Similarly, in the book *Cerita 25 Nabi dan Rasul*, page 19, it is mentioned that Noah, son of Lamik bin Matta Syalih bin Idris, lived for 950 years according to The Holy Qur'an (QS. Al-Ankabut:14)[9]



One of the best-selling books in Indonesia and Qur'anic-based websites also explains that Noah was sent by Allah (SWT) to invite his people to worship Him, and for approximately 900 years, he preached to three generations of his people. Prophet Noah only gained 70 followers along with 8 members of his family.[10] Imam Ibn Kathir, in his book *Qishashul Anbiya*, also mentions Noah's age as 950 years. However, scholars differ in interpreting Noah's age: some state he was 50 years old when appointed as a prophet, others 350 or 480 years, concluding with the phrase, "Only Allah knows." [11]

M. Quraish Shihab, an Indonesian Qur'anic scholar, in *Tafsir Al-Misbah* Vol. 10, page 37, interprets Surah Al-Ankabut, verse 14, as indicating that the 950 years refer to the period of Noah's preaching among his people, excluding the years before his prophethood and after his survival from the flood. Shihab also cites Sayyid Qutb's commentary, which notes that such an age is extraordinary and unlike normal human lifespans.<sup>5</sup> By including Qutb's comment, Shihab implicitly questions the interpretation of Noah's unusually long lifespan.

The figure of 950 years, as presented in the 25 articles, reflects a common understanding in Indonesian studies. According to these sources, Noah was born 126 years after Adam's death and lived 950 years. This figure has raised questions among scholars and historians, as it contradicts typical human lifespans, especially given the Qur'an's generally rational and logical approach [12]

The age of 950 years is based on a literal interpretation of Surah Al-Ankabut, verse 14: فَلَبِثَ فِيهِمْ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ إِلَّا خَمْسِينَ عَامًا "He remained among them for a thousand years less fifty years." The simple calculation is  $1000 - 50 = 950$  years, which has become widely accepted. However, historical-critical analysis suggests two aspects must be considered:

### 1. Linguistic Aspect

In QS Al-Ankabut, verse 14, Allah uses two different words for "year": سَنَةً (*sanah*) and عَامًا (*aman*). A key question arises: why not use only one term to denote "year"? Agus Mustofa, on the YouTube channel *Islam Futuristik*, explains that Dr. Adnan Ibrahim states سَنَةً (*sanah*) can refer to a period of variable length and dimension, e.g., QS Al-Ma'arij, verse 4; خَمْسِينَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ (5000 years) and QS As-Sajdah, verse 5 أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ (1000 years). Meanwhile, عَامًا (*aman*) denotes a fixed period equivalent to a solar year (365.6 days), as seen in QS Al-Baqarah, 259; مِائَةَ عَامٍ (100 years) and QS Luqman, 14, عَامَيْنِ (2 years).

### 2. Sumerian Numerical Aspect

The Sumerians, one of the earliest advanced civilizations, lived in Mesopotamia (modern southern Iraq) around 4000–2000 BCE. They pioneered mathematics using a quinary-vigesimal system (base 5 and 60), applied in calculations and calendars.[13] Thomas E. Balke explains that the Sumerian numerical system combined quinary (base 5) and sexagesimal (base 60).[14] A. Seidenberg (1965), in *The Sixty System of Sumer*, argues that numbers below 60 follow a quinary-vigesimal system.[15] For clarity, decimal-quinary conversion can be illustrated as follows:



Decimal: 1 2 3 4 **\*\*5\*\*** 6 7 8 9 **\*\*10\*\***

Quinary: 1 2 3 4 **\*\*10\*\*** 11 12 13 14 **\*\*20\*\***

Thus, the decimal number 5 corresponds to 10 in quinary due to its base-5 system.

Decimal Numbers		Sumerian Quinary Numerals
0 1 2 3 4		0 1 2 3 4
<b>5</b> 6 7 8 9 10	←→	<b>10</b> 11 12 13 14
11 12 13 14 15		20 ..... 24
16.....20		30..... 34
21.....24		40.....
<b>25</b>	←→	<b>100</b>
30		110.....114
36.....39		120
40		
50		
60.....dst		400.....
120		
<b>125</b>	←→	<b>1000</b>

Numbers at the Same Level

**Figure 1.** Conversion from Sumerian Quinary to Decimal Numerals

Figure 1 shows the results of the conversion: the number 10 in the Quinary system corresponds to 5 in the decimal system, 100 Quinary equals 25 decimal, and 1000 Quinary equals 125 decimal. Considering the Sumerian numerical system, the phrase *ألف سنة* (“1000 years”) in QS. Al-Ankabut, verse 14, is understood based on the Sumerian Quinary (base-5) system. Meanwhile, *خمس مائة* (“50 years”) follows the decimal system as currently used. Thus, the age of Prophet Noah (AS) before the Great Flood = 1000 (Quinary) converts to 125 years in decimal; subtracting 50 years results in 75 years.

Using the Quinary numerical system employed by the Sumerians, it can be understood that the age of Prophet Noah in the Qur’an, traditionally interpreted as 950 years, corresponds to approximately 75 years before the flood. This falls within a normal human lifespan. An interesting question arises regarding the Qur’anic wording in Surah Al-Ankabut, verse 14: *ألف سنة إلا خمسين عاماً* (“a thousand years less fifty years”). Why does the Qur’an use two different words for “year” (*سنة* and *عاماً*) instead of using one term consistently? Linguistically, this precise choice reconciles the Sumerian quinary system with the modern decimal system, preserving both the sacred text and logical coherence.



### Discussion

The study highlights the importance of a historical-critical approach to the narrative of Prophet Noah (AS) within Indonesian Islamic studies, particularly in understanding Qur'anic narratives. This approach does not seek to question the truth of the Qur'an but aims to interpret divine messages comprehensively by considering linguistic, historical, and anthropological aspects.

Methodologically, neglecting the socio-cultural context in Qur'anic studies can lead to suboptimal understanding of the wisdom and moral lessons in prophetic narratives. It is necessary to include local culture and the civilization in which Prophet Noah lived the Sumerians as a basis for analyzing his preaching, opposition from his people, and the flood event. Historical facts are difficult to ascertain if socio-cultural factors are ignored. The Qur'an should not be interpreted solely on a literal basis without considering historical and social contexts.[16] Fazlur Rahman proposes a hermeneutic that combines textual and social (historical) analysis for a comprehensive understanding of revelation.[17] Wansbrough emphasizes socio-historical contextualization in Qur'anic interpretation, particularly through literary and historical critique.[18] These approaches align with the findings of this study.

The research provides an alternative perspective on understanding Noah's age in a more contextual and historical manner. Previously, the age of 950 years was taken literally from QS. Al-Ankabut, 14: *قَلْبَتْ فِيهِمْ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ إِلَّا خَمْسِينَ عَامًا*. Ignoring linguistic nuances, such as the use of *سَنَةٍ* and *عَامًا*, leads to misconceptions. Considering the Sumerian quinary system, the age of Prophet Noah before the flood is approximately 75 years, which is anthropologically plausible while preserving the rationality and sanctity of the Qur'an.

Most studies on Noah's narrative rely solely on Islamic internal sources. This study underscores the importance of integrating external sources, including Jewish (Torah: Noah/נח), Hindu (Matsya Purana, Shatapatha Brahmana), archaeological findings, and ancient civilization studies. Ancient Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (1st century CE) in *Antiquities of the Jews* discusses Noah and human dispersal, citing non-Jewish historians like Berossus, who recounts the Babylonian flood (similar to the Epic of Gilgamesh).[19] Such external sources are valuable because they are chronologically closer to Noah's era and enrich historical understanding. Collaboration between internal and external sources can better approximate historical reality.

Applying a historical-critical approach in Indonesian Islamic studies faces challenges, including resistance from those who consider it "Western" or threatening to the purity of Islamic teachings. However, as this study demonstrates, it strengthens comprehension of the Qur'an's universality and its ability to communicate across historical and cultural contexts. Constructive dialogue between traditional and contemporary approaches is essential for developing methodologies suitable for Indonesia without compromising scholarly rigor. This aligns with the spirit of Islamic intellectual renewal that has been developing since the colonial era.



## CONCLUSION

This study moves beyond a descriptive understanding of the narrative of Prophet Noah by demonstrating how a historical-critical approach can fundamentally reshape the interpretation of Qur'anic narratives within Indonesian Islamic scholarship. Rather than treating the narrative as a fixed theological account, this research shows that it can be recontextualized as a dynamic construct shaped by historical, cultural, and linguistic dimensions. The reinterpretation of Noah's age from a literal 950 years to an estimated 75 years within a Sumerian numerical framework serves not merely as an empirical correction, but as a methodological illustration of how critical inquiry can challenge long-standing exegetical assumptions and open space for more historically grounded readings of the Qur'an.

This study contributes to the development of a more integrative paradigm in Qur'anic studies, one that bridges the divide between normative-theological interpretation and critical-historical analysis. It highlights that Qur'anic narratives should not be confined to moral and doctrinal functions alone, but can also be examined as texts embedded within broader civilizational and epistemic contexts. Methodologically, the study underscores the importance of incorporating external sources such as ancient Near Eastern traditions, linguistic analysis, and numerical systems into the study of Islamic texts, thereby expanding the analytical toolkit available to scholars. This shift not only enriches interpretive possibilities but also aligns Islamic scholarship with broader interdisciplinary practices in the humanities.

The findings imply that the dominance of homogeneous narrative patterns in Indonesian scholarship is not merely a descriptive phenomenon but reflects a deeper methodological limitation. By introducing a historical-critical framework, this study provides a replicable model for re-examining other Qur'anic narratives that have traditionally been approached in a purely normative manner. This has significant implications for both academic research and Islamic education, particularly in fostering critical thinking and contextual awareness in the interpretation of religious texts.

This study is not without limitations, particularly in its reliance on a constrained body of academic literature and limited engagement with archaeological and primary historical data. Future research is therefore encouraged to adopt a more expansive interdisciplinary approach, integrating archaeology, philology, and comparative mythology to further test and refine the findings presented here. In conclusion, this study affirms that the adoption of historical-critical methodologies does not undermine the sacredness of the Qur'an, but rather enhances its intelligibility by situating its narratives within a richer and more nuanced interpretive framework, thereby contributing to the advancement of contemporary Islamic scholarship.



### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare no financial or non-financial conflicts of interest regarding this manuscript.

### **Data Availability Statement**

Data associated with this study will be provided by the corresponding author upon request.

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