



# TAFSIR AHKAM RAWAI' AL-BAYAN BY MUHAMMAD 'ALI AL-SABUNI

Hendra Syafrianto<sup>1</sup>, Agus Widiyanto<sup>1</sup>, Abdulhamid Ahmad Mahmud Faqir<sup>2</sup>, Sobhan<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> STAI Pengembangan Ilmu al-Qur'an Sumatera Barat, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> Omdurman Islamic University, Sudan

<sup>3</sup> UIN Imam Bonjol Padang, Indonesia

✉ [hendrasyafrianto10@gmail.com](mailto:hendrasyafrianto10@gmail.com)

## Abstract

One of the notable contemporary works of tafsir that focuses specifically on legal verses (*āyat al-ahkām*) is *Rawā'i' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr Āyāt al-Aḥkām min al-Qur'an*, authored by the Syrian scholar Muhammad 'Alī al-Ṣabūnī. Al-Ṣabūnī, who completed both his undergraduate and postgraduate studies at al-Azhar University in Cairo—one of the oldest and most prestigious centers of Islamic learning—brings a strong traditional scholarly foundation to his work. In composing this tafsir, he employed a systematic and rigorous methodology. He began by examining classical exegetical sources, linguistic analyses, and relevant hadith literature, engaging deeply with the opinions of earlier mufasssirin (Qur'anic commentators). Only after this extensive process of study, comparison, and critical discussion did he articulate his own interpretations.

The book is particularly significant for its focus on extracting legal rulings from the Qur'an, presenting them in a structured and accessible manner while still maintaining engagement with classical scholarship. However, despite its scholarly contributions, al-Ṣabūnī's work has not been free from controversy. Some Saudi scholars, particularly those aligned with Wahhabi interpretations, have criticized and refuted aspects of his methodology and conclusions. As a result of these critiques and broader theological disagreements, his works have faced restrictions and have been banned from circulation by the Saudi government. This tension highlights ongoing debates within contemporary Islamic scholarship regarding interpretive authority, methodological approaches, and doctrinal differences.

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## INTRODUCTION

The writing of Rawai' al-Bayan Tafsir Ayat al-Ahkam min al-Qur'an was motivated by al-Sabuni's desire to implement one of the purposes of the revelation of the Qur'an: to be a light for human life. This commentary is also structured with a comprehensive system, simple language, and relevance to current world conditions and developments.

Its distinctive approach, method, and style demonstrate the author's seriousness in studying and explaining the Qur'an, especially the legal verses. Because this commentary focuses on legal verses, it can be said to be a fiqh (legal) interpretation. In discussing legal verses, al-Sabuni combines *bi al-ma'sur* (reference) and *bi al-ra'yi* (reference) using the *tahlili* (reference), *maudhu'i* (reference), and *muqaran* (reference) methods.

In this research, the author will check again in the book 'Tafsir Rawai' al-Bayan whether Muhammad Ali al-Sabuni in writing this book of interpretation was not influenced by other schools of fiqh, such as what was said by al-Sayyid Muhammad 'Ali Iyazi in the book *al-Mufasssirun Hayatuhum wa Manhajuhum*.

Therefore, *the wasathiyah* of the Prophet needs to be developed and implemented, especially the Prophet Muhammad is the best example for every Muslim in implementing his religious teachings, building social relations between fellow Muslims and between religious people, including the example of human relations with the environment. Moreover, this concept is important for the Indonesian people, because the Indonesian people live in a pluralistic and coexistence in various aspects. Therefore, this paper seeks to explain the concept of *wasathiyah* from the aspect of understanding hadith based on the historical methodology of hadith, and is complemented by the interpretation of Islamic scholars' understanding.

## METHODS

This research uses a literature study method, which is focused on collecting data from various relevant literature, such as hadith books, scientific articles, and related scientific works. This approach is carried out by examining primary and secondary sources to understand the concept of *wasathiyah*. This research also includes an analysis of the concept of the prophet's hadiths which were then reformulated by Muslim scholars, using the *al-jam'u* method, and gave birth to a more contextual understanding.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Biography of Muhammad 'Ali al-Sabuni

#### a. Origins of Muhammad 'Ali al-Sabuni

Muhammad 'Ali al-Sabuni was born in the Halb region, better known as Aleppo, Syria, in 1928 CE/1347 AH (al-Sayyid Muhammad 'Ali Iyazi, 1993). Muhammad 'Ali al-Sabuni is a contemporary thinker who is quite prolific in writing, particularly in the field of Quranic exegesis (*mufasssir*), more precisely, he is a contemporary *mufasssir* or contemporary interpreter. He is a professor of Sharia and Islamic Studies at King Abdul Aziz University in Makkah al-Mukarramah (Muhammad Yusuf, 2006) currently known as Umm al-Qura University.

#### b. Muhammad 'Ali al-Sabuni's Education

Muhammad 'Ali al-Sabuni was raised in an educated family. He received basic and formal education in Arabic, inheritance, and religious studies under the direct guidance of his father (Muhammad 'Ali al-Sabuni, 1981). From an early age, he demonstrated a talent and intelligence in absorbing various religious knowledge. At a young age, he had already memorized the Quran (Muhammad Husain al-Dzahabi, 2000). It is no wonder that this ability earned him the admiration of many scholars at his school.

After completing his primary education, he continued his formal education at the government-run Madrasah al-Tijariyyah, a school he only attended for one year. He then continued his education at the Khasrawiyya, a specialized sharia school in Aleppo. While attending Khasrawiyya, he studied not only Islamic sciences but also general sciences. He successfully completed his education at Khasrawiyya and graduated in 1949. On a scholarship from the Syrian Department of Waqf, he continued his education at al-Azhar University, Egypt, until completing his undergraduate degree from the Faculty of Sharia in 1952. Two years later, at the same university, he obtained a master's degree in Sharia Justice (*Qudah al-Syar'iyyah*). His studies in Egypt were on a scholarship from the Syrian Department of Waqf ('Adil Nuwaihidi, 1988).

#### c. The Works of Muhammad 'Ali al-Sabuni

Muhammad 'Ali al-Sabuni was a prolific commentator in the interpretation of the Quran, explaining the meaning of verses in detail and with beauty in his presentation. His thoughts are reflected in his diverse works. 'Abd al-Qadir Muhammad Salih, in his *Al-Tafsir wa al-Mufasssirun fi 'Asr al-Hadith*, described him as a scholarly scholar who produced many quality works. Among his works are ('Abd al-Qadir Muhammad al-Salih, 2003):

- 1) *Al-Tibyan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*
- 2) *Al-Tafsir al-Wadiah al-Muyassar*
- 3) *Al-Qur'an al-Karim wa bi Hamisiyih Durrah al-Tafasir*
- 4) *Mukhtasar Tafsir Ibn Kasir*
- 5) *Al-Mawaris fi al-Syari'ah al-Islamiyyah fi Dau' al-Kitab wa al-Sunnah*
- 6) *Al-Ibda' al-Bayan*
- 7) *Safwah al-Tafasir*
- 8) *Rawai' al-Bayan Tafsir Ayat al-Ahkam min al-Qur'an.*

## **2. Profile of the book Rawai' al-Bayan: Tafsir Ayat al-Ahkam min al-Qur'an.**

### **a. Background to the Writing of the book Rawai' al-Bayan: Tafsir Ayat al-Ahkam min al-Qur'an.**

The book *Rawai' al-Bayan: Tafsir Ayat al-Ahkam min al-Qur'an* is a contemporary tafsir book that seeks to present the Qur'an with comprehensive explanations, simple language, and a systematic method (Muhammad 'Ali al-Sabuni, 2001).

The presence of this book, *Tafsir Ayat al-Ahkam*, is a response to the problems faced by society, particularly in Islamic law, which naturally differs from one another. In fact, this diversity sometimes becomes a barrier in the lives of Muslim communities, preventing them from keeping pace with the pace of development, ultimately contributing to their backwardness compared to other communities.

Al-Sabuni, a contemporary scholar faced with such conditions, was drawn to studying and presenting the Quran so that people's anxiety regarding existing problems in Islamic law could be alleviated and their hearts would be calmed by reading it.

His interest in writing his commentary was motivated by several points he conveyed in the introduction to his commentary, namely (Muhammad 'Ali al-Sabuni, 2001):

First, he believed that among the deeds that come first, and the best deed that humans should perform, is serving God's book, the Quran. Allah made the Quran a light and light of life for humanity, and as the final, or final, message revealed to mankind.

Second, one of the deeds that can endure and continue to flow to humans even after death is beneficial knowledge, namely, deeds whose benefits are believed to continue to flow to humanity if they continue to be utilized by people.

Third, with this book of interpretation, it is hoped that it can provide convenience and clarity to the people in understanding the teachings contained in the Koran, especially the provisions that are not stipulated by Allah through His legal verses.

Fourth, the goals he describes in the preamble to his book. He hopes that his work can be maintained, so that it will benefit all Muslims until the end of the day, namely the day when nothing will benefit from wealth and offspring except those who come to Allah with a clean and safe heart.

This book consists of two volumes (Ismail Basha al-Baghdadi, t.t). The first volume of this book consists of 498 pages and a cover, the contents of which discuss legal verses from surah al-Fatihah to surah al-Hajj verse 37. Meanwhile, the second volume consists of 520 pages and a cover, the contents of which discuss legal verses from surah al-Nur verse 1 to surah al-Muzzammil verse 10.

This book is a book that collects legal verses in the Koran. In a sense, it is from this book that Muslims can take reference for laws (*mashadir al-ahkam*), as well as the main reference, namely the Koran. It is through this work that Muslims gain a lot of information and benefits, because they can know the positive laws of religion, society, and so on. So that Muslims do not have the hassle and complexity of understanding the Koran in its entirety. This work became a momentum for his expertise in the field of Al-Qur'an interpretation, and to date it is his masterpiece (Khairuddin al-Zirikli, 2002).

As for *Tafsir Rawai' al-Bayan, Tafsir Ayat al-Ahkam min al-Qur'an*, it is a fiqh-based interpretation, as can be seen from the title of his book. He used the *muqaran* method in writing his book, which involves comparing the opinions of fiqh scholars before drawing conclusions on verses dealing with law.

**b. The Systematics of the Writing of the Book Rawai' al-Bayan, "Tafsir Ayat al-Ahkam min al-Qur'an."**

The Book Rawai' al-Bayan is a contemporary tafsir book that strives to combine the authenticity of the past with the beauty of the present, so that the Qur'an can always provide guidance and illuminate the journey of human life as a whole.

Among the distinctive features of this tafsir book is its consistent systematic writing and discussion, reflecting the actuality of its interpretation and its ease of understanding. This certainly demonstrates the author's desire to present the Qur'an with an engaging interpretation.

Muhammad 'Ali al-Sabuni, in each of his works, always strives to integrate the thoughts of exegetes (mufasssirun), both from the mutaqqaddimin (the early scholars) and the muta'akhhirin (the later scholars). This is as he expresses in the introduction to his book.

"Like this book, where I concluded from what the mutaqqaddimun and muta'akhhirin said, and combined previous and current opinions, and I didn't write anything until I had read approximately 15 pieces of literature from the main literature of the books of tafsir, language and hadith, then I wrote this discussion in muhadarat form with explanations from the literature that I quoted with full trust." (Muhammad 'Ali al-Sabuni, 2001)

The systematic preparation of Rawai' al-Bayan is to order the interpretation, starting from surah al-Fatihah to surah al-Muzzammil, and only focusing on legal verses so that not all verses in the surah are interpreted (Muhammad 'Ali al-Sabuni, 2001).

- 1) Parsing certain pronunciations (al-tahlil al-lafzi) which are reinforced by various opinions of mufasssir and Arabic language experts.
- 2) Explain the general meaning (al-ma'na al-ijmali) of the legal verses that will be discussed.
- 3) Mention the cause of the nuzul verse if the verses in question actually have a nuzul cause.
- 4) Explain the aspects of the relationship (irtibat/munasabah) between verses.
- 5) Discuss interpretation in terms of al-qiraat al-mutawatirah.
- 6) Briefly discuss the verse being discussed in terms of i'rab.
- 7) Exploring the depth of interpretation which includes the secrets of the beauty of the language (balagah) of the Koran and the depth of scientific power contained in it.
- 8) Disclosure of the content of Sharia laws and the opinions of fuqaha' (fiqh scholars) along with their arguments to then carry out tarjih to derive stronger arguments.
- 9) Take the essence (conclusion) shown by the verses discussed.
- 10) The discussion concludes by presenting the wisdom of the sharia issues contained in the legal verses mentioned.

These ten systematics are the framework that he uses in his book Tafsir Ayat al-Ahkam in detail and comprehensively, the ten steps are used as subtitles in explaining existing legal verses.

**3. A glance at the Muqaddimah of the Rawai' al-Bayan Book**

In the muqaddimah of his book, al-Sabuni said that what is in the book Rawai' al-Bayan is not only the result of his own hard work, but his book is a summary of the thoughts of famous exegetes, both Mataqqaddimin and contemporary.

Al-Sabuni also emphasized in the muqaddimah of the Rawai' al-Bayan book, that he would not start writing and compiling this book before he had first read more than 15 tafsir books in addition to linguistic books and hadith. After that, al-Sabuni wrote explanations about the verses he discussed by attaching the sources of his reading.

**4. Mufasssir School of both Aqidah and Fiqh**

Muhammad Ali al-Sabuni is a person who adheres to the Ash'ariyah aqidah, because he adheres to the Ash'ariyah aqidah, many Saudi scholars have criticized and refuted his work. Among the scholars who refuted his work were Sheikh Safar al-Hawali, Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Baz, al-Albani, Abu Bakar Zaid and others (Umar Rida Kahhalah, 1993). His book that received the most objections from Wahhabi scholars was the book Shafwah al-Tafasir. This caused the Saudi government to prohibit the distribution of his book until the mistakes they thought were wrong had been corrected and corrected by al-Sabuni (Safar bin Abd al-Rahman al-Hawali, 1988).

**5. Example of the interpretation of Muhammad Ali Al-Sabuni in the book Rawai' al-Bayan Tafsir Ayat al-Ahkam min al-Qur'an.**

In discussing legal verses, al-Sabuni combined bi al-ma'sur and bi al-ra'yi using the tahlili, maudhu'i, and muqaran methods. This was al-Sabuni's source in developing the Rawai' al-Bayan

commentary, "Tafsir Ayat al-Ahkam min al-Qur'an."

For the record, al-Sabuni states in his introduction that, before writing Rawai' al-Bayan, he first read and understood books on tafsir, language, and hadith.

Al-Sayyid Muhammad 'Ali Iyazi, in his book "Al-Mufasssirun Hayatuhum wa Manhajuhum," states that al-Sabuni's interpretation was not influenced by any particular school of thought (mazhab) in his interpretation. This will be the focus of this discussion. The author only takes a few examples from al-Sabuni's commentary. Is it true that al-Sabuni was not influenced by any particular school of thought in his interpretation? The following are examples of al-Sabuni's interpretations.

#### a. Al-Fatihah

Is basmalah one of the verses of the Koran? Scholars agree that the basmalah is found in Surah al-Naml verse 30.

إِنَّهُ مِنْ سُلَيْمَانَ وَإِنَّهُ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٣٠﴾

However, these scholars still disagree on whether Is the basmalah a verse from Surah al-Fatihah, or is it the first verse of every surah? There are several opinions on this matter (Muhammad 'Ali al-Sabuni, 2001):

- 1) The Shafi'i school of thought holds that the basmalah is a verse from Surah al-Fatihah and a verse from every surah.
- 2) The Maliki school of thought holds that the basmalah is neither a verse from Surah al-Fatihah nor from any of the surahs of the Quran.
- 3) The Abi Hanifah school of thought holds that the basmalah is a separate verse from the Quran, revealed as a separator between surahs, and that it is not a verse from Surah al-Fatihah.

Based on the opinions above, as-Sabuni argues that the Hanafi opinion is the strongest in this regard, as it is a neutral view between the two opinions, namely the Shafi'i and the Malkiyyah.

The basmalah is a verse from the Quran, but it is not a verse from any surah or from Surah al-Fatihah itself. Basmalah is a verse that functions as a separator between letters. This is hinted at by the hadith narrated by Ibn Abbas:

"That Rasulullah SAW did not know the limits of the letters so it was revealed to him bismillahirrahmanirrahim."

And it is further reinforced that basmalah is not the verse at the beginning of each surah. The reason is that the Koran was revealed according to the Arabic method, and Arabs knew the aspects of the Balaghah, especially in terms of the preamble. If basmalah is the opening verse for each letter, then each letter is opened using the same method. This violates the beauty of the presentation within the framework of the miracles of the Koran (Muhammad 'Ali al-Sabuni, 2001).

This is the Hanafiyyah view that basmalah is a verse from the Koran but is not the opening verse in Surah al-Fatihah, but basmalah is the dividing verse between the letters.

#### b. Regarding the word Quru` in Surah al-Baqarah verse 228

وَالْمُطَلَّقَاتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ ۗ

The word quru` according to language means menstruation and purity. Islamic jurisprudence scholars differ on the meaning of verse 228 of Surah al-Baqarah. There are two opinions (Muhammad 'Ali al-Sabuni, 2001):

- 1) Imam Maliki and Shafi'i argue that the term "quru`" in this verse refers to purity. This opinion is also narrated by Ibn 'Umar, 'Aisha, and Zaid ibn Thabit, and is also one of two opinions of Imam Ahmad.
- 2) Abu Hanifah and Ahmad (in one narration) argue that the term "quru`" in this verse refers to menstruation. This opinion is also narrated by 'Umar, Ibn Mas'ud, Abu Musa, Abu Darda', and others.

Regarding the above opinions, as-Sabuni argues that the second opinion is perhaps the stronger one, because the primary purpose of observing the iddah is to purify the uterus (bara-

aturrahim). Purity of the uterus can be determined by menstruation, not by purity.

### c. About the Size of Wiping the Head in Ablution

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ وَامْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ

In the matter of ablution (wudu'), the issue is the wiping of the head. Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) scholars agree that wiping the head is one of the obligatory acts of ablution. However, there is a difference of opinion among Islamic jurisprudence scholars regarding the extent or limits of wiping the head. Among them (Muhammad 'Ali al-Sabuni, 2001):

- 1) The Maliki and Hanbali scholars are of the opinion that wiping the entire head is obligatory out of precaution.
- 2) The Hanafi scholars are of the opinion that wiping a quarter of the head is obligatory based on the practice of the Prophet (peace be upon him) wiping the crown of his head.
- 3) The Shafi'i faith is of the opinion that wiping a small portion of the head is sufficient, as long as it can be considered wiping, even if it's only a few strands of hair, as long as one is absolutely certain.

According to as-Sabuni, the letter ba` in Arabic was originally used to mean tab'idh (partial). However, using it to mean zaidah contradicts the original meaning. Therefore, wiping part of the head is obligatory in ablution, and wiping the entire head is sunnah. Therefore, in this case, the Shafi'i and Hanafi opinions are more correct, but the Maliki and Hanbali opinions are more cautious.

From the three examples above, the author concludes that as-Sabuni follows the Hanafi school of jurisprudence in matters of fiqh. For each issue discussed in the above exposition, as-Sabuni's opinion leans more towards the Hanafi opinions than the other scholars. However, this conclusion cannot be drawn firmly, as the author has only presented a few examples of fiqh issues in as-Sabuni's interpretation.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation of the commentary on the Ahkam Rawai'i al-Bayan by Muhammad 'Ali al-Sabuni, several conclusions can be drawn:

The author of the book "Tafsir Rawai' al-Bayan" (Tafsir Ayat al-Ahkam min al-Qur'an) is Muhammad 'Ali al-Sabuni. He was born in 1928 CE/1347 AH in the Halb region (Aleppo), Syria. He completed his undergraduate studies at the Faculty of Sharia, al-Azhar University, Egypt, in 1952 and his Master's degree in Sharia Justice (Qudah al-Syar'iyyah) from the same university in 1954. He is a prolific contemporary thinker. Among his works are Al-Tibyan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an, Al-Tafsir al-Wadiah al-Muyassar, Al-Qur'an al-Karim wa bi Hamisyih Durrah al-Tafasir, Mukhtasar Tafsir Ibn Kasir, Al-Mawaris fi al-Syari'ah al-Islamiyyah fi Dau' al-Kitab wa al-Sunnah, Al-Ibda' al-Bayan, Safwah al-Tafasir, Rawai' al-Bayan Tafsir Ayat al-Ahkam min al-Qur'an.

The background to the writing of the book Tafsir Rawai' al-Bayan Tafsir Ayat al-Ahkam min al-Qur'an is based on four aspects of the problem, namely a) believing that among the deeds that come first, and the best deeds that humans need to do is serving God's book, namely the Qur'an, b) one of the deeds that can survive and still continue to flow to humans even though they have died, c) can provide convenience and clarity for people in understanding the teachings. contained in the Qur'an, especially provisions that are not stipulated by Allah through legal verses, d) provide benefits to all Muslims until the end of the day.

Tafsir Rawai' al-Bayan is a tafsir that only discusses legal issues in accordance with the title Tafsir Rawai' al-Bayan Tafsir Ayat al-Ahkam min al-Qur'an starting from surah al-Fatihah to surah al-Muzzammil. Before writing this book, al-Sabuni studied and read various books on interpretation, language, and hadith.

Al-Sabuni's school of faith is Ash'ariyah, while his school of jurisprudence is Hanafi. The examples of interpretations presented by al-Sabuni on legal issues indicate that he favored the Hanafi school of thought.

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