An Analysis of Interpretation Methods of Qur'anic Verses: A Study of the Manuscript of Abu Layst As-Samarqandi's Bahjat Al-ʻUlûm

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Abstract

Examining a manuscript will uncover numerous aspects of Islam. The Bahjat Al-‘Ulûm was discovered in Magelang City. This study aims to analyze the verses found in the manuscript of Bahjat Al-‘Ulûm by Abu Layst As-Samarqandi and elucidate the method and style of interpretation used. This study employed a descriptive analysis method with library study. The book Bahjat Al-‘Ulûm discusses the 'ilm al-kalam and includes nine Qur’anic verses. The analysis of these verses reveals that two verses illustrate the muqaddimah (preface); Allah’s trait Al-Razzaq is addressed in the third and fourth verses, belief in the angels is explored in the fifth verse, the names of prophets are mentioned in the sixth verse, the rewards for the believers and disbelievers are discussed in the seventh and eighth verses, and faith is elaborated in the ninth verse. The Quranic verses mentioned serve as a legal foundation. The author has determined that the
verses were interpreted using the ijmali approach with a sufhi style.

**Keywords**: Abu Layst As-Samarqandi, Bahjat Al-‘Ulūm, Manuscript, and Interpretation.

**Abstrak**


**Kata Kunci**: Abu Layst As-Samarqandi, Bahjat Al-‘Ulūm, Naskah, dan Tafsir.

**A. Introduction**

The term "tafsir" is derived from the Arabic word (تفسير), which originates from the word (فسر), signifying clarity or explanation. Tafsir in the Lisānu'l Arabic lexicon unveils the meaning found in intricate verses. Husnu Hakim explains that the term "tafsir" originates from the Arabic words al-kasyf (disclosure) and al-bayan (explanation). Interpretation is the act of revealing something that was previously concealed. Fasara is akin to Safara

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1. Ibnu Mandzur, *Lisānul Arab* (Darul Maarif, 1992), page. 3412.
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سفورا المراءة (سفر), which denotes to uncover. It is used in phrases like (سفورا المراءة), meaning "a female traveler uncovering her face," or "wa asfara's Subhu," which translates to "Fajr has been uncovered."³

Tafsir is a field of study that focuses on the correct pronunciation of the words in the Quran (بouflاط النطق كيفية القرآن). Tafsir encompasses the science of qiraat, which involves numerous narrations and variations in pronunciation. The variations in qiraat might lead to discrepancies in meaning and law interpretations.⁴ Hakim discusses the science that interprets the Qur'an by analyzing Allah's intentions in His passages based on human capabilities. The term "interpreting" refers to scientific effort that necessitates the backing of a certain profession based on this definition. Interpretation is subjective (شاهية), not definitive or universally true (حق). No interpretation is flawless, as absolute truth is exclusive to Allah.⁵

Studying traditional Islamic manuscripts is crucial for understanding the development and expansion of Islam. Examining a manuscript can uncover different facets of Islam, including social history and ideology.⁶ Classical manuscripts are located in Indonesia. A manuscript of Bahjat Al-ʻUlūm was discovered in Magelang City. Manuscripts must be examined because of their historical significance in Islamic studies.⁷ These factors inspire motivation to study the text. The researcher aims to identify the

⁵ Hakim, Kaidah Tafsir Berbasis Terapan: Pedoman Bagi Para Penghafal Al-Qur’an, page. 15.
Qur'anic verses in the Bahjat Al-ʻUlûm manuscript and analyze the author's interpretation methods and styles.

No previous literature analysis has examined the Bahjat Al-ʻulûm by analyzing the Quranic verses inside, particularly focusing on its method of interpreting the passages. This research aims to gather Quranic verses from Bahjat Al-ʻUlûm and examine them using the tafsir approach. Abdul Razaq and Haryono's research explores the study of Muhammad Ash-Shabuni's Tafsir method in Kitab Rawâiu' al-Bayân. The study aims to analyze the interpretation of the Qur'an in the Rawâiu' al-Bayân using the content analysis approach. The similarity in this study is that it examines the method of interpretation of Qur'anic verses in a book. However, the object of investigation is different, namely the Rawâiu' al-Bayân book.

The thesis by Andi Hariyono examines the Wahbah Zuhaili interpretation method used in the book Al-Munir. The methodology employed is a literature review. The goal of this study is to assess the method of interpretation of Qur'anic verses in the book using the same method, but the subject of inquiry is different, namely the book Al-Munir.

Amalia Anisa's thesis analyzes the significance of faith in the text of Abu Layst As-Samarqandi's Asmarakandi. The manuscript is housed in the art studio of Dawuhan Village, Dawuhan District, Banyumas Regency. This research employs a qualitative methodology, with explanations drawn from philology and literature. The similarity is that the object of this research uses asmarak manuscripts from Dawuhan Village, while the author uses manuscripts from Magelang City. The difference is that the author uses a different method of analysis.

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Several experts have studied the book of Bahjat Al-ʻulūm from a philological perspective, but no one has explicitly investigated its Qur'anic verses. These are the primary points of distinction in the present study.

The method used is library research, which uses existing library materials as the primary data source to explore the foundations of theories and concepts according to previous experts, tracking changes in research, gathering diverse information on selected topics, using secondary data, and avoiding duplication. The literature study involved tracing and uncovering pieces of Qur'anic verses in the Bahjat Al-ʻulūm manuscript using two sources: primary and secondary. The primary source is the Bahjat Al-ʻulūm manuscript, while the secondary source is preceding literature with similar themes to support the primary data.

The analytical method utilized is descriptive, which examines, analyzes, and clarifies. Descriptive research does not compare that variable in other samples. The author analyzes and discusses systematically the methodology of interpreting the verses of Al-Qur'an in the book Bahjat Al-ʻulūm. The outcomes of the study provide new information.

Reading is a data collection technique. The reading is based on the verses of the Qur'an being read. The goal is to understand the methods, strategies, and sources employed by Abu Layst As-Samarqandi in the book Bahjat Al-ʻUlūm.

**B. Brief Notes About the Book of Bahjat Al-ʻulūm And Abu Layts As-Samarqandi**

1. **The Description of Bahjat Al-ʻulūm**

    Kitab Bahjat Al-ʻulūm is the first manuscript owned by Sagaf Al-Jufri in Magelang City. Sagaf Al-Jufri founded the Al-Iman Educational Foundation in Magelang City. The manuscript includes six different books: Bahjat Al-ʻulūm, Bayān Lābudda, Al-Miftah fi šyarḥ Ma'rifatu Al-Islām, Al-

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11 Masri Singarimbun and Sofian Effendi, Metode Penelitian Survei (Jakarta: PT Pustaka LP3ES Indonesia, 1989), page. 70.
Mufīd, Tilmisāny, and Syarḥ Ummu Al-barāhin. According to the observations, the manuscript contains several damaged areas, particularly the front. The book contains 20 pages with dimensions of 30 cm x 19 cm. The book is not in good condition; some pages have been torn, particularly in the initial half. Despite age-related degradation, the text is still readable. The book is inscribed in Arabic script with various colors, including red ink for the Matan and black ink for the Syarah. The Qur'an contains 13 verses, 11 of which are in the body of the book and indicated with the term Qauluhu ta'ala, and two of which are contained in the book's muqaddimah (preface). The paper used is Deluwang paper with a watermark. The book title and author's name can be found near the beginning, as shown in the sample below:

Figure 1.1 Muqaddimah (Preface)

Figure 1.2 Example of Book Content

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There is no information on when this book was written. However, in general, the discussion in this document focuses on the concept of faith. In addition to Sagaf Al-Jufri's collection, the National Library has a collection of this book, which measures 26 by 19 cm, with the text measuring 10 x 14 cm and totaling 188 pages, each with 9 lines.

The manuscript of Bahjat Al-‘Ulūm, a great work by Abu Layst As-Samarqandi, comprises the science of kalam, which includes questions and answers about Tawheed and Fiqh. Each topic explanation is preceded by the word mas’alah (question), followed by a response beginning with faljawabu (answer). Kitab Bahjat Al-‘Ulūm, unlike other tafsir books, does not interpret all verses of the Qur'an. Instead, it is a book of kalam that writes several verses of the Qur'an as a source of law on the topic discussed and then explains it. According to the author, this is a method of interpreting the verses of the Qur'an.

The name of the book is found at the beginning of the book, commonly called muqaddimah in line 6, which says:

"......وسميته ببهجة العلوم في الشرح في بيان عقيدة الأصول......"

"......wa sammaytuhā bi bahjati Al-‘ulūm fi asy-syarḥī fi bayānī aqīdati al-üşūlī......". Meaning: ‘......I named the book Bahjati Al-‘ulūm fi ash-sharḥī fi bayānī aqīdati al-üşūlī (the pleasure of knowledge in explaining and clarifying the points of faith)."

The book concludes with a colophon providing details on its identity, specifically Syarh As-Samarqandi, but does not specify the year of its composition. Refer to lines 14 and 15 on the final page:

"......تمت هذا الكتاب المسمي بشرح السمارقندي والله اعلم في يوم الرابع في الشهر المحرم في الهلال الأربع في السنة الهاء......"

"......Tammat ha‘za al-kitāba al-musammā syarhu al-ṣyamarqadiy. Wa Allāhu akīm fīi yaumi al-rabi fīi syahri ʿāl-muharrām fīi al-hilāli al-arba‘ī fīi as-sanāfī ilhā‘ī......”. meaning: ‘......a book called Sharh As-Samarqandi was completed, and Allah is the all-knowing,

On Wednesday, the fourth day of Muharram, in the year of *ilaha'i*…

2. Abu Layst As-Samarqandi's Track Record

The second page of the *muqaddimah* explains Abu Layst As-Samarqandi's name as the book's author. Abu Layst As-Samarqandi is also known as Muhammad ibn Abi Nasr ibn Ibrahim. In the field of *nahwu*, Abu Layst is used as a synonym for the term *Shaykh*. As-Samarqandi is then introduced as an explanatory phrase, with the phrase "the grace of Allah showered on Muhammad Abu Layst" serving as the object of the preposition. Abu Layst was born in 290 AH in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. His father gave him the name Nasr bin Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Ibrahim. He was also recognized as Abu Layst As-Samarqandi. The second name indicates his location of birth. Abu Layst adopted this name as his surname later on. Abu Layst passed away on Tuesday night, the 11th of Jumadil Akhir in 373 AH, and was laid to rest in Balkh city beside his mentor, Abu Ja'far al-Hindiwany.¹⁵

Abu Layst was a Hanafi Fiqh scholar. This is evident from the knowledge he learned from Shibani through Juzajani.¹⁶ However, Abu Layst As-Samarqandi (d. 393/1003) referred to 481 cases in which Abū Yūṣuf and al-Shaybānī disagreed with Abū Hanīfah. Furthermore, out of 440 cases, only one disagreed with Abū Hanīfah.¹⁷ In Balkh, Abu Layst studied with great figures such as Kholil bin Ahmad bin Ismail (d. 368 AH), Muhammad bin al-Husain al-Haddady (d. 388 AH), Ali Abu Ja'far al-Hindiwani (d. 362 AH), Muhammad bin al-Fadhl al-

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Balkhy al-Mufassir (d. 319 AH) and others. Abu Layst is also considered the moralist and preacher of the tenth century.\textsuperscript{18}

His works are categorized into four divisions: legal texts, Sufism texts, Kalam texts, and tafsir texts. His works include Suluk Ngasmara, Tanbighul Ghaffilin, Masa'il, and Bahjat Al-ʻulūm.\textsuperscript{19} Abu Layst acquired the titles of Al-Faqih, Imam Al-Huda, and Al-Zahid due to his works.\textsuperscript{20} A tafsir by Abu Layst has been translated into Turkish in four volumes.\textsuperscript{21}

C. The Quranic Verses in The Kitab

The book Bahjat Al-ʻulūm contains nine Qur'anic verses. Only seven verses begin with \textit{qauluhu ta'ala}, whereas two do not. It includes six distinct topics, as follows:

1. The First and Second Verses

The Muqaddimah of the book begins with two words of Allah from Surah Al-Fatihah, verses 1 and 2. The author starts the book with the reading: "\textit{Bismillāh al-Rahmān al-Rahīm}," which means "By mentioning the Name of Allah, the most gracious, the most merciful," followed by the lines "\textit{Alhamdu li Allāhi Rabbi Al-ala'mina}" which means "Praise be to Allah, the ruler of the universe."


\textsuperscript{19} Farkhan Fuady and Nur Alfianti, ‘Jejak Pemikiran Abu Mansur Al-Maturidi Dan Abu Lais Al-Samarqandi Tentang Keimanan’, Jurnal Pemikiran Islam, 1.2 (2021), page. 119–34. \url{http://dx.doi.org/10.22373/jpi.v2i1.11237}.

\textsuperscript{20} Haron. page. 321

2. The Third and Fourth Verses about the Trait of Allah: Al-Razzaq

In the explanation of Al-Razzaq, the author lists two verses in the Qur'an, the first of which is mentioned in Surah Hud verse-6 "Wamā min dābatin fī al-ardi ʾillā al "a Allāhi rizquha," which means "there is no creature on earth but that upon Allah is its provision."

DOI://dx.doi.org/10.24042/al-dzikra.002024181919000
Secondly, Allah says in Surah Ash-Shura verse 11: "Laysa usšlihi syaiun wa huwa alsamiu al-bāṣir." This means: "There is nothing like it, and Allah is all-hearing, all-seeing." This means that there is not a single creature that is similar to God.

**Figure 1.5 Surah As-Syura verse 11**

3. **The Fifth Verse about the Belief in the Angels of God**

The second pillar of faith is believing in the angels. In the Bahjat Al-ulūm, believing in angels is explained as a question and answer, with the author writing the editorial as follows: "If you are asked, how to believe in angels?" The answer is that angels come in various forms and sorts and have many wings. In this regard, the author uses the Qur'anic verse Surah Fatir verse 1 as an explanation, which reads "Uli ajnihatin mašnā wa šulaṣa, wa rubā 'a." which means: "Who made angels as messengers (to take care of diverse affairs) who have wings, each (of which) is two, three, and four."

**Figure 1.6 Surah Al-Fatir verse 1**
4. The Sixth Verse about the Belief in the Prophets

The book Bahjat Al-ʻulūm states that believing in all the names of the prophets of Allah is not a need of faith, as mentioned in the Qur'an Surah Al-Mu'min verse 78: "Wa minhum qusṣiṣa alaika, wa minhum man lam yuqaṣṣis alayka." Meaning: "And indeed We sent messengers before you, some of whom We told you about and some of whom We did not tell you about," because knowing the exact name and number of the Prophet is not a condition of faith.

![Figure 1.7 Surah Al-Mu’min verse 6](image)

5. The Seventh and Eighth Verses about the Reward for Disbelievers and Believers

Judgment day is the day of judgment for mankind. The book Bahjat Al-ʻulūm discusses faith in the judgment day by linking it to individuals' rewards for their actions in this world. Believers are promised heavenly blessings, while non-believers will face torment in Hell. The author bases his argument on two verses of the Qur'an: The Surah Al-Baqarah verse 25, which states: "Wa lahum fiḥā azwajun muṭahharatun wahum fiḥā khālidūn." This means: "They possess forgiveness and heaven, and they will stay there."
Allah's Word in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 39: “Wa al-lāzīna kafarū wa kāẓzabu bi āyātinā ūlaika ʾashabu alnāri hum fihā khalīdūna”. Meaning: "Those who disbelieve and oppose Our verses are the inhabitants of Hell, and they will remain there."

6. The Ninth Verse about Faith

The end of the book is about the nature of faith. It is written in the Quran in Surah Al-Saffât verse 96: "Wa Allāhu khalaqakum wa mā tamalūna." This means: "Allah has created you and what you do."
D. Verses Interpretation Methods of *Bahjat Al-ʻulūm*

The method is the approach used by the *mufāsir* (interpreter) to produce the writing of his interpretation. The term "method" originates from the Greek word "*methodos,*" meaning route or way, and is translated into Arabic as "*manhaj.*" In Indonesian, this word refers to performing tasks systematically and rationally to accomplish scientific objectives, among other areas. Several books of interpretation use the *ijmali* method, including Tafsir Al-Jalalain, Tafsir Shofwah al-Bayan Li-Ma'ani Al-Qur'an by Husain Makhluf, al-Muhalla wa al-Suyuti, and Tafsir al-Wajiz by al-Wahidi al-Naisaburi.

The author discovered that the Qur'anic verses in the Bahjat Al-ʻulūm manuscript used the *ijmali* interpretation method. The explanation of general Qur'anic verses involves a worldwide conversation rather than a detailed analysis. The major objective of this strategy is to clarify the meaning of words (*uslub*). The *ijmali*

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25 Rokim, page. 45.
method is distinguished by the mufasir's brief interpretation of the Qur'an, free of analogies and titles. Using this manner, the mufasir examines, studies, and conveys material by consulting related hadith. For example, in the image below:

![Figure 1.11 Surah Al-baqarah ayat 39 and explanation](image)

Quran surah Al-Baqarah verse 39: “Wa al-lažīna kafarū wa kazzabu bi āyītinā ūlaika aṣhabu alnāri hum fīhā khalidūna”.

Abu Layst states that disbelievers will be chained in Hell and will never be able to escape. Heaven and Hell are the hereafter rewards for those who obeyed and sinned, respectively. Heaven is reserved for those who follow. Hell is destined for sinners and disbelievers. According to a well-known hadith, Heaven is located in the sky, as is Hell. Both are categorized as beings. Simply said, anyone who doubts anything about Heaven and Hell, including its

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26 Departemen Agama RI, page. 72.
beauty, disbelieves, and this is evidence that Islam is null and void according to Sharia because doubt does not imply assurance. He must believe in the concepts of Heaven and Hell in his heart.

E. Sufi' Style in The Interpretation of Verses in The Bahjat Al-ʻulûm

Classical Sufism is typically defined as an interpretation that seeks to explain the meaning of a Qur'anic verse via the lens or basic indicators understood by a Sufi in his Suluk and Tariqat. According to Muhammad Sofyan, Sufism is "the speech of the heart and the communication of the spirit" or "the guidance that the mufassir gets through revelation."27

Tafsir al-Shufiyah is made up of two types of tafsir: Shufi Nadzary and Shufi Isyary. The definition of Nadzary interpretation is based solely on the Sufi's thinking, such as the philosophical thoughts of Imam Abu Su'ud. Shufi Isyary interpretation is based on the mufassir's experience, such as al-Tustari's tafsir al-Quran al-'Adzim and al-Sulami H. The existence of conditions and Shari'i reasoning that support it do not contradict Shariah or diminish the plain meaning, making this interpretation legitimate.28

In Bahjat Al-ʻulûm, Abu Layst emphasizes the Sufi interpretation of the Qur'an, as demonstrated by his explanation of the urgency of faith in Surah Al-Saffat verse 96:


28 Sofyan, page 93.
Abu Layst defined the nature of faith, stating that its existence today stems from something previously unreal to real or from real to unreal. The response is that faith is a "lafâz" that incorporates validity (ibhâm) and has two sides: qadîm and hadîth. This is one of two exceptional rules. 1) Qadîm characterizes faith; 2) Hadîth characterizes faith. The words are qadîm in nature. All that is qadîm, like the trait of al-Bâry of Allah, stems from the qadîm, which is the attribute of His actions and might. And everything new is also new, such as the provisions and actions of a servant. The existence of a new trait is impossible for the One who has both the Qadîm and the hadîth attributes. It is uncommon for a servant to possess the qualities of divinity and vice versa.

From the example of the above description, we can find his thoughts that tend to lead to Sufism.
F. Conclusion

Upon examining Abu Layts As-Samarqandi's manuscript of Bahjat Al-ʿulūm, the researchers discovered that the author used nine distinct Qur'anic verses with varying themes. The author employed the maudhu'i technique to interpret the Qur'anic verses in the Bahjat Al-ʿulūm text because the discussion is grounded in general language and focuses on specific issues. The essence of the interpretation of these passages concerning the tasawuf of monotheism indicates that the interpretation style employed is the Sufi style.

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