

Comparative Study of Tafsir Marah Labid and Al-Azhar in Interpreting Mutasyabihat Verses Regarding Lafazh Istiwa

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Abstract

Scholars divide the verses of the Qur'an into two categories: muhkam and mutasyâbihat. One of the most hotly discussed topics is how to interpret the verses in mutasyâbihat that deal with Allah's characteristics. As such, we talk about mutasyabihat verses concerning the qualities of Allah, but we limit our discussion to the lafazh istiwa in this instance. We shall talk about the Nusantara mufasssirs' comparative interpretations of the verses about the characteristics of Allah SWT regarding the lafazh Istiwa found in Marah Labid, and in Syaikh Nawawi al-Jawi's interpretation of Al-Azhar.

Keywords: Istiwa, Hamka, Nawawi, Tafsir Al-Azhar, Tafsir Marah Labid

Introduction

One of the features of the Qur'an is that the words and sentences are very short but have a lot of meanings that cannot be understood textually.³ Therefore, in understanding the verses of the Qur'an so that it does not become an error in interpreting then someone must learn the methods that have been provided by the scholars. Because the language of the Qur'an is very full of implied intentions and purposes.⁴ In the Quran there is a division of verses called muhkam and mutasyabih. Both of these verses are inseparable from differences of opinion of scholars. muhkam is derived from the word al-hukm which means to decide between two things or matters. In a brief explanation muhkam is to confirm between words by separating false news from the true. Mutasyabih, on the other hand, comes from the word shabah, which means similar or the same between two or more things. Usually, the similarity causes ambiguity or obscurity and even confusion to determine between one and the other.⁵ The beginning of the verse that refers to the two verses that cannot be separated is in Surah Al-Imran verse 7:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلَةٍ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ ءَأَمَّنَّا بِإِذٍ كُلِّ مَنْ عِنْدَ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

Meaning: "The Bible (Quran) was sent down to you by Him. Its contents include mutasyaabihaat (verses) and muhkamaat verses, which form the core of the Qur'an. If someone has a tendency toward misguidance, they may follow some of the mutashabihaat verses in order to lure others and try to understand them; however, only Allah is able to explain them. "We believe in the verses that are mutashabihaat; they are from our Lord," declare people with deep knowledge. "We believe in the verses that are mutasyaabihaat; they are from our Lord," declare people with profound knowledge. Furthermore, sensible people do not take lessons from them. (Ali Imran, QS: 7).

Basically surah Al-Imran verse above is one of the sources of Salaf and Khalaf scholars studying how the existence of mutasyabihat verses whether it can be interpreted or not. The Qur'an that was communicated by Allah SWT. to his servants using Arabic as a means of understanding it. This is because the first target is the Arab community. On the other hand, the Quran is not understood the same from time to time. Instead, it is understood according to the changing times. Therefore, tafsir seeks to explain the message of God that is stored in the Quran. Nevertheless, humans do not have the same understanding. This is due to the muhkam and mutasyabih.

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³ M. Qurais Sihab, Mukjizat al-Qurân, Ditinjau Dari Aspek Kebahasaan, Isyarat Ilmiah dan Pemberitaan Gaib (Bandung: Mizan,2007), hlm. 120.

⁴ M. Qurais Sihab, Mukjizat al-Qurân, Ditinjau Dari Aspek Kebahasaan, Isyarat Ilmiah dan Pemberitaan Gaib, hlm. 121.

⁵ Manna' Khalil Al-Qaatan, Mabahist Fii Ulumumul Quran terj, (CV, Literatur Nusannata, Cet 18, Thn 2015), hlm 304

An issue that is often still being discussed in the current era of globalization is the issue related to mutasyabihat verses. It is not uncommon for some groups to invalidate and even disbelieve other groups who do not share their beliefs regarding these verses. For example, people who call themselves salafi consider other groups who interpret verses related to the nature of Allah as Ahl al-Bid'ah, although not all of the actions of these people are considered heresy, in the sense that those who interpret perform heresy only in terms of understanding the Qur'an.⁶ Then the Ahlu Sunnah group who considered heretical those who believed in tashbih (likening Allah to something) and ta'thil (canceling the attributes of Allah).⁷

Likewise, the Mu'tazilah considered heretical those who believed there were ma'ani attributes in Allah. While the Asy'ariyyah also considered the Mu'tazilah wrong who did not believe in the existence of properties attached to God.⁸ Thus it is a handful of problems contained in the verses of creed that the impact is not only different views, but - more than that - can lead someone to consider heresy, heresy, and even paganize each other. This will have the effect of dividing Muslims who should be united together despite differences in views.⁹

Departing from these problems, in this paper we try to explain the interpretation of mutasyabihat verses about lafazh istiwa according to the interpretation of Shaykh Nawawi in his tafsir marah labid and hamka in his tafsir al-azhar.

Research Methods

We have employed the library research approach in creating this scientific work, wherein the author attempts to gather and get facts and information from books. In accordance with the subject under discussion, the necessary materials will be gathered. Primary and secondary studies are the two categories of studies utilized as data sources. The author employs Shaykh Nawawi's Tafsir Marah Labid and Hamka's Tafsir Al-Azhar as primary sources, concentrating on mutasyabihat verses about the Qur'anic lafazh istiwa. Arabic dictionaries, books, journals, articles, theses, dissertations, and so on form the next category of secondary sources.

The author of this scientific work employed a descriptive-analytical technique to producing qualitative research, which describes or describes in advance the problems to be addressed as an initial description that is followed by the analysis. The descriptive-analytical approach, on the other hand, refers to the author's attempt to evaluate the meanings of the Qur'anic word istiwa as given by Syaikh Nawawi and Hamka before drawing conclusions.

Discussion

A. Definition of Mutasyabihat Verses

In language (etymology) the word mutasyābihāt is a plural form (jama' muannats sālīm) of the mufrad mutasyābih, which is taken from the root word shabah which means similar or the same between two or more things. Usually, the similarity causes ambiguity or obscurity and even confusion in determining between one and the other. As in the Qur'an وَأَنزَلْنَا بِهَا مِثْقَالَ عِلْبَانٍ (QS. al-Bâqarah 2:25) and إِنَّ الْبَقَرَ تَشْبَهُ عَلَيْنَا (QS. al-Bâqarah [2]: 70). In its pronunciation, some term it mutasyābih while others say mutasyābihāt.¹⁰

As for the term, mutasyābih is defined as a verse whose meaning only Allah knows, for example, related to guidance and dhalalah, the worship of nature, the hand of Allah, fawatih as-suwar¹¹, the age limit of the world, certain numbers such as the number of Angels Zabāniyah.¹²

B. Mutasyabihat Verses in the Quran

It is undeniable that there are many mutasyābihat verses in the Qur'an that discuss the attributes of Allah such as istiwa (abiding), wajhullah (the face of Allah), yad (hand), 'ain (eye) and others. However, the mutasyābihat verses that we will compare in the interpretation of Syaikh Nawawi Al-jawi and Hamka in tafsir Marah Labid and Tafsir Al-Azhar regarding Lafadz istiwa (abiding).

C. Hamka and Tafsir Al-Azhar

a. Hamka's Biography

Abdul Malik is the small name of the author of Tafsir al-Azhar, he was born in Sungai Batang Maninjau-West Sumatra, on February 16, 1908 M./13 Muharram 1326 H.5 Abdul Malik was later better known as Hamka which is actually an acronym for Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah.

It is not surprising that Hamka was born and raised in an environment of renewal that his father fought for since 1906 in Minangkabau, given that his father (Haji Rasul) was both a reformer and a cleric who oversaw the "Sumatra Thawalib"

⁶ Abdul 'Aziz Ibn Baz, Majmu' Fatawa wa Maqalat Mutanawwiah, Vol. 2, (Riyad: Dar al-Qasim li An- Nashr, 1420), hlm.106.

⁷ Abū Abdillāh Al-Dahabī, Kitab al-'Arsh, Vol. 1 (Madinah: Maktabah al-Mulk Fahd al-Wathaniyah, 2003), 142.

⁸ Al-Maliki, Jalā' al-Afhām Sharḥ 'Aqīdah al-'Awwām, hlm. 30.

⁹ Fauzul Iman, "Ijtihad dan Mujtahid," Al-Qalam, Vol. 21, No. 1 (April 2004), hlm. 3–8.

¹⁰ Muḥammad 'Abd al-'Azīm al-Zarqānī, *Manāhil al-'Irfān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Kairo: Dār al-Hadis, 2001), Jilid II, hlm. 225.

¹¹ As-Suyūthi, Al-Itqān, jilid 2, hlm 299.

¹² Al-Baydāwi, Anwār Tanzil (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2003), jilid 1, hlm 149.

Islamic boarding school in Padang Panjang. Specifically, this occurred after his father returned from studying in Mecca with Sheikh Ahmad Khatib. Consequently, social tensions and polarization resulting from the rejection of 'parents' against the idea of 'youth' renewal led by his father also contributed to shape Hamka's identity in the future.¹³

Hamka began his educational journey at the ayahnya, and after the war (1915), he continued his education in a desa or pendidikan organization. Furthermore, in 1916, Hamka was admitted to the Diniyyah school in Pasar Usang. After finishing school (1915), Hamka continued his education by studying at a small school or an educational institution. He started his education with his father. And in 1916, Pasar Usang Padang Panjang's Diniyyah school accepted Hamka (entered in the afternoon). He and his peers resumed reciting the Qur'an in the surau at night. 1918, two years later, he started attending the Thawalib school his father had gone to.¹⁴

Hamka entered elementary school (Sekolah Desa) when he was eight years old (1916). By his father, he was also enrolled in the Diniyah school, founded by Zainudin Lebay El-Yunusi.¹⁵ Not long after, Hamka was withdrawn from the Village School and transferred to Madrasah Tawalib - this madrasah was none other than the surau where his father taught - this was intended by his father to galvanize Hamka to become a great ulama' in the future. According to Hamka's narrative, the lessons given in the two educational institutions did not attract him, except for the lesson of 'Arudl, the scales of 'Arabic poetry.¹⁶ This seems to be a manifestation of his soul's inclination to the world of literature and poetry.

In 1924–1925, Hamka visited Yogyakarta, Pekalongan, and Java when he was sixteen years old. Ultimately, the rihlah had a significant influence on Hamka's interpretation of Islam. During his stay in Yogyakarta, Hamka had the chance to meet prominent Islamic figures. Among them was Ki Bagus Hadikusumo, who introduced him to a new approach to studying tafsir. This method focused on understanding the meaning and content of Qur'anic verses rather than just reading the matan of tafsir with the correct nahwu, as Hamka had learned in Padang Panjang. Additionally, he met Haji Fachruddin (a Muhammadiyah figure), RM. Suryopronoto, and HOS Cokroaminoto (the leader of the Islamic Society). From these three individuals, Hamka learned about many life ideals, Islam and socialism, sociology, and, lastly, a particular study of.¹⁷

Some of the top colleges in the world have acknowledged Hamka's contributions to science. Upon receiving the Doctor Honoris Causa degree from Al-Azhar University in Egypt in 1958, he gave a keynote address about Muhammad Abduh's impact in Indonesia. In 1974, Hamka was also granted an equivalent degree by the University of Kebangsaan Malaysia.¹⁸

After writing 84 works over a 57-year period in the areas of philosophy, religion, and literature, Hamka passed away on Friday, July 24, 1981. He resigned as chairman of the MUI shortly before he passed away due to the controversy surrounding the fatwa that forbade Muslims from celebrating Christmas. But the government, or more specifically the Minister of Religious Affairs, disapproved of the fatwa and gave MUI the order to retract it. Remember that even though the fatwa was eventually repealed, Hamka said, " The truth cannot be disputed, even if fatwas are rescinded."¹⁹

b. Tafsir Al-Azhar

Tafsir al-Azhar was born when Hamka often filled the morning study at al-Azhar mosque which was still called al-Azhar mosque in Kebayoran.²⁰ In 1961, the Rector of al-Azhar University, Mahmoud Syaltout visited Indonesia as a state guest, he visited the al-Azhar Kebayoran mosque where Hamka lived and became an imam at the mosque, he admired the methods and ways of da'wah in the mosque. He then changed the name of the Kebayoran mosque to al-Azhar mosque. "Hopefully it will become al-Azhar in Jakarta, like Al-Azhar in Cairo."²¹

In 1964 Hamka was put in prison on charges of treason by the Old Order government, during his detention he had completed his Tafsir al-Azhar. Here the author will explain the method of interpretation and style of Hamka's interpretation. However, Hamka's detention did not become an obstacle to completing his tafsir, it became a wisdom and a gift in itself to complete Tafsir al-Azhar which he wrote even though he often moved.

As a prisoner, Hamka had moved from resting places in the Puncak area, such as Bungalow Herlina, Harjuna, Bungalow Brimob Mega Mendung, and the police detention room in Cimacan, West Java. Even as a prisoner of the Old Order, Hamka remained active in his activities to complete his tafsir at the Rawa Mangun Friendship Hospital, Jakarta, where he was hospitalized. On January 21, 1966, Hamka was released from detention by the New Order, at which time he used his time well to perfect and improve Tafsir al-Azhar that he wrote during his detention.²²

Tafsir al-Azhār by Hamka is his own monumental work. Through this tafsir Hamka demonstrates the breadth of his knowledge in almost all disciplines covered by the field of Islam. Hamka tries to present his interpretation in a language that is easy to understand. He tries to interpret the verses of Alqurān from several aspects by using a discussion that is

¹³ Yunan Yusuf, Corak Pemikiran Kalam Tafsir al-Azhar, (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas. 1990), hlm. 22-23.

¹⁴ Endad Musaddad, Studi Tafsir di Indonesia, (Tangerang: Sintesis, 2012), p.117.

¹⁵ Muhklis, Inklusifisme Tafsir, hlm. 34.

¹⁶ Hamka, Kenang-kenangan Hidup, Jilid I, hlm. 58.

¹⁷ Hamka, Kenang-kenangan Hidup, Jilid II, hlm. 90.

¹⁸ Yunus Amirhamzah, Hamka Sebagai Pengarang Roman (Jakarta: Puspa Sari Indah. 1993), hlm. 6-7.

¹⁹ Hamka, Tasawuf Modern, ..., 159.

²⁰ M. Yunan Yusuf, Corak Pemikiran Kalam Tafsir Al-Azhar (Jakarta: Penerbit Pustaka Panjimas, 1990) Hal. 53

²¹ Dadi Purnama Eksan, Buya Hamka Teladan Dan Inspirasi Penuh Talenta, Cetakan ke 1, Hlm .3145.

²² Mafri Amir & Lilik Ummi Kultsum, Literatur Tafsir Indonesia dalam Lembaga Penelitian UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta 2011, Hlm. 167.

relatively not too long, therapy is also not too short. In other words, he tries to present a work of interpretation that is sufficient and in accordance with the tastes of its readers. *Tafsir al-Azhār* was written by Hamka since 1950.²³

C. Syaikh Nawawi al Jawi and Tafsir Marah Labid

a. Biography of Syaikh Nawawi

Among the esteemed scholars from the archipelago who enjoy global renown is Shaykh Nawāwi al-Bantāni. Known by his full name, Shaykh Nawāwi al-Bantāni, is Abū Abdul Mu'thī Muhammad Nawāwi bin 'Umar bin 'Arabi. Various names and titles appear on the title pages of some of the books he authored; these occasionally introduce his home country, his area of specialization, or his name and ancestry. For instance, Muhammad bin Umar bin Arbi bin Alī, Shaykh Muhammad Nawāwi al-Jāwi, Shaykh Muhammad Nawāwi bin Umar Nawāwi al-Jāwi, and Shaykh Muhammad bin Umar Nawāwi al-Jāwi. The longest name is Abū 'Abdul Mu'thī Muhammad bin Umar bin 'Alī Nawāwi al-Jāwi al-Bantani at-Tanari, which can be found in one of his writings, *Nihāyah*.²⁴

At the age of eighty-four, he passed away in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, on 25 Shawwal, 1314 H, in 1897 M. He was born in Tanara village, Tirtayasa sub-district, northern Banten, in 1230 H or 1813 M. He was buried in Ma'la Makkah next to the graves of Asma' bint Abu Bakr as-Siddiq and Ibn Hajar al-Haitami, who died in 947 H and wrote the book *Tuhfatul Muhtāj*.²⁵

Tanara's first son of a cleric was Nawawi al Bantani. Jubaidah, his mother, was a native of Tanara and descended from his father. According to legend, Nawawi al Bantani is descended from Maulana Hasanuddin, who, at the request of his father, Syaikh Syarif Hidayatullāh, also known as Sunan Gunung Djati Cirebon, founded and opened the Islamic kingdom of Banten. During the 19th century, Syaikh Nawāwi was one of the most well-known academics of the Shafi'i school of fiqh. He rose to prominence and became a highly influential figure in the Islamic world, particularly in the field of education, as a result of his numerous written works.²⁶

Shaykh Nawāwi was a scholar who was thirsty for knowledge. After he studied with his own parents and several scholars in Java, at the relatively young age of 15, Shaykh Nawāwi along with his two brothers Tamin and Ahmad left for Mecca to perform the pilgrimage. Shaykh Nawāwi stayed there for three years. There he studied with several scholars who were very famous at that time such as Shaykh Ahmad Dimyathi, and Shaykh Ahmad Zaini Dahlan (both of whom were major scholars in Makkah). He also studied with Shaykh Muhammad Khâtib al-Hanbali (a great teacher in Medina).²⁷

After three years in Mecca, he returned to Tanara and tried to develop his knowledge. After returning from the Holy Land, Shaykh Nawāwi stayed for about three years in Indonesia. He built a mosque and completed the building of his father's hut. During his three years in the country, he also took the time to study with Shaykh Qura, a great scholar in the Karawang area of West Java.²⁸ . When he saw that the situation in Indonesia was not conducive to spreading Islamic knowledge due to the repressive attitude of the Dutch government, Shaykh Nawāwi returned to the Holy Land. It was there that Shaykh Nawāwi's scholarship was widely recognized by the Islamic world, so he was nicknamed "Sayyid Ulama al-Hijaz" (Leader of the Ulama of Hijaz).²⁹

Since his second departure, Shaykh Nawāwi Al-Bantāni has never returned to Indonesia. According to historical records, in Makkah Syaikh Nawāwi Al-Bantāni tried to explore religious knowledge from several scholars, some of whom were scholars from Indonesia who settled in Makkah, such as Shaykh Muhammad Khâtib Sambas, Shaykh Abdul Ghāni Bima Shaykh Junaid Al-Batāwi, Shaykh Mahmud bin Kannān Al-Falimbāni, Shaykh Abdurrahmān Al-Falimbāni, Shaykh Arshad bin Abdus Shamad Al-Falimbāni and Shaykh Yūsuf bin Arshad Al-Banjari. He also studied with Shaykh Yūsuf, Shaykh Ahmad Nahrāwi and Shaykh Abdul Hamid Ad-Daghestāni who were Egyptian nationals.³⁰ He is one of the many Nusantara scholars who are very well known internationally due to his intelligence in various kinds of religious sciences, as well as from his works from various fields of science including in the fields of tafsir, fiqh, tashawuf, tawhid, Tarikh and others.

Shaykh Nawāwi Al-Bantani in the field of fiqh became an adherent of the Shafi'i school of thought as reflected in his books, such as *safinatunnaja*, *nihayatuz zain*, *sullam at-taufiq*. In the field of theology, it can be seen from some of his writings that Shaykh Nawawi often claimed to be an adherent of the theology of Imam Abu Hasan Ash-Sh'ari and Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi. As an adherent of Ash'ariyah, Shaykh Nawawi introduced many concepts of the *sifatiah* of

²³ Endad Musaddad, *Studi Tafsir di Indonesia...*, p.121.

²⁴ Muhammad Ulul fahmi, *Ulama Besar Indonesia Biografi dan karyanya*, (Kendal: Amanah Grafika, 2008), hlm. 4.

²⁵ Surahmat, *Potret Ideal Relasi Suami Istri: Telaah Pemikiran Hadith Shaikh Nawāwi Al-Bantani*, *Jurnal Universum*, Vol. 9, no. 1 Januari, 2015, hlm. 90.

²⁶ Shalahuddin Wahid, Iskandar Ahza, *100 Tokoh Islam Paling Berpengaruh di Indonesia*, (Jakarta: PT Intimedia Cipta Nusantara, 2003), hlm. 87.

²⁷ Shalahuddin Wahid & Iskandar Ahza, *100 Tokoh Islam Paling Berpengaruh di Indonesia*, (Jakarta: PT Intimedia Cipta Nusantara, 2003), hlm. 88.

²⁸ Ahmad Dimiyati Badruzzaman, *Kisah-kisah Israiliyyat dalam Tafsir Munir*, (Bandung: Sinar Baru Algesindo, 2005), hlm. 10.

²⁹ Sinta Nuriyah Abdurrahman Wahid, *Wajah Baru Relasi Suami-Istri*, (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2003), hlm. 208.

³⁰ Kafabihi Mahrus, *Ulama Besar Indonesia Biografi dan Karyanya*, hlm. 6.

Allah. In addition, regarding naqli and aqli. Shaykh Nawawi also positioned as his proportion, not prioritizing reason over the evidence of the nash.³¹

b. *Tafsir Marah Labid*

Marah Labid li kasyf al-Qur'an al-Majid is Al-Bantani's only work in the field of Tafsir. In his muqaddimah al-Bantani said that it took him a long time to build the courage to write tafsir, despite the encouragement that came from various parties. He was worried about falling into the threat of the Prophet who said "Whoever speaks about the Qur'an with his ra'yu, then please take a place in hell"³² After successfully building courage, al-Bantani finally decided to write this tafsir. He called it an effort to emulate the salaf scholars who always wrote and recorded their thoughts. He also wrote the words "li-kulli zaman tajdid", meaning "in every age there is a need for renewal". This statement proves that Nawawi was not closed to the renewal movements that emerged in the 19th century, especially in Egypt and other parts of the Middle East.³³

The tafsir Marah Labid or also known as Tafsir al-Munir li Ma'alim al-Tanzil. This book was completed in 1305 H/1884 AD and was first published in Makkah. The book consists of two volumes, the first volume is written from al-Fatihah to Surah al-Kahf. While the second volume is from Surah Maryam to al-Nas. This book has undergone several printings. In the fifth edition in 2013, the book of Marah labid was published in Beirut by dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, with a thickness of 1368 pages.³⁴

Shaykh Nawawi al Bantani was a prolific scholar in writing religious works in various fields. One of his expressions in the realm of interpretation is Tafsir al Munir li Ma'alim al Tanzil al Mufassiru 'an Wujud Mahasin al Ta'wil, commonly known by the popular name Marah Labid li Kasyf Ma'na Qur'an al Majid. Among all of his works, it might perhaps be his magnum opus. It makes sense that he is a well-written, non-Arabic academic in this regard.

He started writing the tafsir after some requests from many noble people (al 'Azzah) who were around him at that time to write a tafsir of the Quran. The request for Shaykh Nawawi al Bantani to write a tafsir appeared before his tafsir was named with that designation or name. This is actually the background or underlying the writing of Tafsir Marah Labid or Tafsir Munir that appears or presents before us. The word Marah Labid etymologically means "sack or place of happiness" and terminologically means "a place of happiness for people or those who return to the path of Allah SWT"³⁵ This naming for a work of interpretation does not seem to have any tendency, because the meaning of the title language given is like the orientation of other interpretations (ittijah al Tafsir).

C. *Syaikh Nawawi and Hamka's Interpretation of Mutasyabihat Verses Regarding the Lafazh Istiwa*

The word istiwa' is written 12 times in the Qur'an, and the word istiwa' related to the nature of Allah SWT is contained in 9 verses of the Qur'an, namely in surat al-Baqarah [2]:29, al-A'raf [7]:54, Yunus [10]:3, ar-Ra'ad [13]: 2, Thaha [20]:5, al-Furqan [25]:59, as-Sajadah [32]:4, Fushilat [41]:11, al-Hadid [57]:4, while the verses of the word istiwa' which are not related to the nature of Allah SWT are found in surat al-Qashash [28]:14, an-Najm [53]:6, and surat al-Fath [48]:29.³⁶

In al-Munawwir's dictionary, it is stated that the word istiwa means leveling, equalizing, balancing, straightening, being straight, controlling, enthroned, intending and willing. in al-Mu'jam al-Wasith also the word istiwa is interpreted with several meanings, including leveling, straightening, being fair, fixed, willing and controlling.³⁷

In the Qur'an, the word istiwa which is attributed to Allah SWT and attributed to Arsh is repeated quite a lot with various forms. The following is the interpretation of Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani and Hamka:

1. *Shaykh Nawawi Al-Jawi's interpretation of the meaning of istiwa*

- Shaykh Nawawi interprets the word istiwa to mean qashada (to will/intend) and also the meaning of ja'ala (to make). This is found in Qs. al-Baqarah [2]: 29 and Qs. Fushilat [41]: 11.

Qs. al-Baqarah [2]: 29.

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

So in the verse above there are two terms istiwa *فَسَوَّاهُنَّ* and *اسْتَوَىٰ*.

The first word istiwa means intending/willing and the second word istiwa means making. The point is that after the creation of the earth, Allah intended to create the sky. Qs. Fushilat [41]: 11.

³¹ Mamat Slamet Burhanuddin, "K.H. Nawawi Banten (w. 1314/1897) Akar Tradisi Keintelektualan NU", MIQOT Vol. XXXIV No. 1 Januari-Juni, 2010. hlm. 130-131.

³² Al-Nawawi, Marah Labid li Kasyf Ma'na al-Qur'an al-Majid, (Semarang: Toha Putra, t.th), hlm. 2.

³³ Nawawi Al-Bantani, Marah Labid li Kasyf Ma'na al-Qur'an al-Majid, (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr 1971), Cet. 1, hlm. 4.

³⁴ Rosihon Anwar, Pengantar Ulumul Qur'an, (Bandung, Pustaka Setia, 2009), hlm. 264.

³⁵ Al Fayumi, Ahmad ibnu Muhammad ibnu Ali al Muqri. Tt. Al Mishbah al Munir fi Gharib al Syarh al Kabir li Rafi'i. Jakarta: Dina Mekar Berkah. Hlm. 243.

³⁶ Muhammad Fu'ad al-Baqi, al-Mu'jam al-Mufahrasih li al-Fadzil Qur'an, Hal. 458.

³⁷ Majma' Al-Lughah Al-Arabiyyah, Al-Mu'jam al-Wasith, h. 466.

فَفَضَّلَهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَأَوْحَىٰ فِي كُلِّ سَمَاءٍ أَمْرَهَا ۗ وَرَبَّنَا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصْصِيحٍ وَحِفْظًا ۗ ذَٰلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ

The passage above has the same meaning as the previous verse, which means that after Allah created the earth then Allah aimed to create the sky.³⁸

Furthermore, Shaykh Nawâwi interprets the word *istiwâ* to mean *tasharrafa* (organize) and *dabbara* (take care of). This interpretation is in Qs. Yûnus [10]: 3, Qs. al-A'râf [7]: 54, Qs. Thâhâ [20]: 5, Qs. Al-Furqân [25]: 59, and Qs. al-Hadîd [57]:4.

Qs. Yûnus [10]: 3

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُدَبِّرُ الْأُمْرَ ۗ مَا مِنْ شَيْعٍ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ إِذْنِهِ ۗ ذَٰلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ ۗ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

Qs. al-A'râf [7]: 54

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُغْشِي اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَثِيثًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرَاتٍ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ ۗ تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Qs. Thâhâ [20]: 5

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَىٰ

Qs. Al-Furqân [25]: 59

الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۗ الرَّحْمَنُ فَسئلُ بِهِ خَبِيرًا

Qs. al-Hadîd [57]:4.

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۗ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلْجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا ۗ وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

In the five verse fragments above, Shaykh Nawâwi interpreted the word *istiwâ* with the meaning of *tasharrafa* (organize) and *dabbara* (take care). The point is that after Allah created all this, Allah organized or managed His kingdom perfectly.

Then in Qs. Tâhâ [20]: 5, in addition to the word *istiwâ* being interpreted with *dabbara*, Shaykh Nawâwi also explains that the word *istiwâ* here as a *majaz* of His kingdom and also becomes *kinayah*.³⁹

- In addition to Shaykh Nawâwi interpreting with the meaning of *tasharrafa*, he also menta'wil the word *istiwâ* with *istaulâ* (master), as stated in Qs. ar-Ra'du [13]: 2.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي رَفَعَ السَّمَوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا ۗ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۗ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ۗ كُلٌّ لِيَجْرِيَ لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۗ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّكُمْ تُوقِنُونَ

In the lafazh *istiwâ* above Shaykh Nawâwi interprets it with *istaulâ* (master), meaning that Allah controls the Throne with his guard. Then it appears His arrangement on the Throne after Allah created the sky. He also explained that *istiwâ* is *kinayah*.⁴⁰

- Then lafazh *istiwâ* is interpreted with *istaqama* (guarding/observing), as stated in Qs as-Sajadah [32]: 4.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۗ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا شَفِيعٍ ۗ أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ

The verse above Shaykh Nawâwi interprets it with *istaqama* (observe), meaning that Allah swt observes His kingdom and regulates it with perfect arrangements.⁴¹

2. Hamka's interpretation of the meaning of *istiwa*

- Hamka's interpretation of lafadz *istiwa* by confronting His attention to the creation of the sky and arranging, in Q.S al-Baqarah [2]: 29,

³⁸ Muhammad bin Umar An-Nawâwi Al-Jâwi, Marâhu Labîd Li Kasyfi Ma'na al-Qurân al-Majîd, jilid II, h. 359.

³⁹ Muhammad bin Umar An-Nawâwi Al-Jâwi, Marâhu Labîd Li Kasyfi Ma'na al-Qurân al-Majîd, jilid II, h. 20.

⁴⁰ Muhammad bin Umar An-Nawâwi Al-Jâwi, Marâhu Labîd Li Kasyfi Ma'na al-Qurân al-Majîd, jilid I, h. 552.

⁴¹ Muhammad bin Umar An-Nawâwi Al-Jâwi, Marâhu Labîd Li Kasyfi Ma'na al-Qurân al-Majîd, jilid II, h. 241.

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ أَسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

According to Hamka, in this verse Allah SWT created first all what was on earth in order to become a facility used for the needs of mankind, then Hamka interpreted istiwa' with Allah SWT who turned His attention to the creation of the sky and all its levels which were once still a dukhan, namely smoke. So Allah also arranged the groups, which He told us were seven.⁴²

- Hamka interprets istiwa' with abiding, this is found in Q.S al-A'raf [7]: 54, and in Q.S ar-Ra'ad [13]: 2, and Qs. al-Hadid [57]:4.

Q.S al-A'raf [7]: 54

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ أَسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۚ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلْجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا ۚ وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

Q.S ar-Ra'ad [13]: 2

اللَّهُ الَّذِي رَفَعَ السَّمَوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا ثُمَّ أَسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۚ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ۚ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۚ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّكُمْ تُوقِنُونَ

Qs. al-Hadid [57]:4.

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ أَسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۚ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلْجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا ۚ وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

Hamka interprets istiwa' as residing based on the use of the word that is often used in classical Malay in honor of the King who resides on the throne. Hamka differentiates the use of the word for the King's dwelling with ordinary people, if ordinary people then it only means sitting. Hamka also elaborated on the meaning of 'Arsh and interpreted it as a throne or mahligai or throne. It is also mentioned that 'Arsh is above the water according to Q.S Hud [11]: 7, and is carried by eight angels as stated in Q.S al-Haqqah [64]: 17, According to Ibn Kathir quoted by Hamka, there is a lot of talk about this istiwa', but following the path of the salaf such as Malik bin Anas, al-Laits bin Sa'ad, as-Shafi'i and others where they leave it as it is, and do not ask about it and do not liken it or divorce it from the nature ascribed to Allah SWT is the straight and right path. Hamka also sees this as transcendentalism contained in modern philosophy, which is an area that is above the power of reason and not an area that does not make sense.⁴³

- Hamka interprets lafadz istawa by organizing, in Q.S Yunus [10]: 3,

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ أَسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۚ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ ۚ مَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّكَ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ فَاعْبُدُوهُ ۚ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

Hamka explained that Allah SWT did not just create the heavens and the earth and then left it at that, but Allah SWT arranged everything from the beginning of creation to the end of life later perfectly. From this Hamka returned to the lafadz before the word يدبر الأمر, namely the lafadz استوى على العرش to link one another into one meaning. And in the end Hamka concluded this lafadz istiwa' to be "He set the order".⁴⁴

- Hamka holds and calls for following the scholars of the salaf in interpreting istiwa', in Q.S Thaha [20]: 5,

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَىٰ

That is to leave it entirely to Allah SWT in the description of Himself. When someone asked Imam Malik about the meaning of istiwa, he replied: Allah's istiwa is known and how it is known is unknown, and believing in it is obligatory, while asking about it is a matter of bid'ah.

- Hamka does not interpret the word istiwa' much, in Q.S al-Furqan [25]: 59, and Q.S as-Sajadah [32]: 4,

Q.S al-Furqan [25]: 59

الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ أَسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۚ الرَّحْمَنُ فَسَلِّ بِهٖ خَيْرًا

Q.S as-Sajadah [32]: 4,

⁴² Hamka, Tafsir al-Azhar, Jilid 1, Hal. 150.

⁴³ Hamka, Tafsir al-Azhar, Jilid 4, Hal. 2395-2396.

⁴⁴ Hamka, Tafsir al-Azhar, Jilid 5, Hal. 3224.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ طَمَا لَكُمْ مِّن دُونِهِ مِّن وَّلِيٍّ وَلَا شَفِيعٍ
أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ

Because according to him, it is a waste of time to interpret the verses of istiwa', because it is beyond the limits of our intellect.⁴⁵

Hamka quoted the view of Ibn Rushd, who is a great philosopher in Islam, that there is no need to discuss this matter. Hamka argues that people who are closely related to God, who have strong faith and piety will not want to talk about it.⁴⁶

D. Perbandingan Penafsiran Syaikh Nawawi Al-Jawi dan Hamka Tentang Istiwa

After reviewing the interpretation books of the two scholars related to mutasyabihat verses related to istiwa. Then next will be discussed about the comparison in the interpretation of the two mufasssirs, here is the explanation.

1. Syaikh Nawawi in his tafsir marah labid interprets mutasyabihat verses regarding lafazh istiwa using the ta'wil method, which is to turn the meaning of a lafazh from its original meaning to get a more precise understanding, this is because of his concern for the future of the faith of the people who do not all understand the contents of the Qur'an. Meanwhile, tafwīd understanding is considered difficult for ordinary people to accept, this can be seen by looking at his interpretation which interprets lafazh istiwa with qashada (willing/intending), ja'ala (making) in Qs. al-Baqarah [2]: 29 and Qs. Fushilat [41]: 11, tasharrafah (organize), dabbara (take care of) in Qs. Yûnus [10]: 3, Qs. al-A'râf [7]: 54, Qs. Thâhâ [20]: 5, Qs. Al-Furqân [25]: 59, and Qs. al-Hadîd [57]: 4., istaulâ (master) in QS. ar-Ra'du [13]: 2. and istaqama (keep/observe) in QS as-Sajadah [32]: 4.
2. In his interpretation at Al-Azhar, Hamka interprets the mutashabih verses regarding the term "istiwa" inclined towards using the method of tafwidh, which is to accept it as it comes without delving into its modality (questioning how it occurs), without likening it (to anything), and without negating it. This can be seen in his interpretation in Surah Al-A'raf [7]: 54, and in Surah Ar-Ra'd [13]: 2, and Surah Al-Hadid [57]: 4. However, sometimes he does ta'wil (reinterpret) some mutashabihat verses, such as his interpretation in Surah Yunus [10]: 3, where he interprets the term "istiwa" as governing.

Conclusion

Understanding the mutashabihat verses involves three methodologies used by scholars to interpret them. Firstly, there's the method of tafwidh, secondly, the method of itsbat, and thirdly, the method of ta'wil. However, the majority of early scholars understood these verses using the methodology of tafwidh, which means they didn't interpret the texts but rather affirmed the attributes established for the Divine Being and purified Him from any deficiencies or similarities to His creations.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that Sheikh Nawawi, in interpreting the mutashabihat verses regarding the term "istiwa," employs the method of ta'wil, which means diverting the meaning of a verse to another meaning that is more acceptable to human reason. On the other hand, Hamka chooses not to reinterpret the meanings of mutashabihat verses, leaving it entirely to Allah. However, sometimes he does reinterpret some mutashabihat verses regarding the term "istiwa."

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⁴⁵ Hamka, Tafsir al-Azhar, Jilid 7, Hal. 5053.

⁴⁶ Hamka, Tafsir al-Azhar, Jilid 7, Hal. 5599.

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