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THE INTERPRETATION OF THE VERSE OF QIWĀMAH FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF MUHAMMAD SA'ID RAMADHĀN AL-BŪTHĪ: AN ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK AL-MAR'AH BAIN THUGHYĀN AL-NIDZĀM AL-GHARBIY WA LATHĀ'IF AL-TASYRI' AL-RABBANIY

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Abstract

This paper discusses the leadership relations between men and women in Islam, especially in the context of giwamah based on the views of Muhammad Sa'id Ramadhān al-Būthī in the book al-Mar'ah bain Thughyān al-Nidzām al-Gharbiy wa Lathā'if al-Tasyri' al-Rabbaniy. The purpose of this study is to examine in depth the meaning of qiwamah according to al-Buthi and how this concept is applied in the relationship between husband and wife. This study uses a qualitative method by analysing the main text of the book, as well as other literature related to the issue of giwāmah. With a moderate and comprehensive tafsir approach, al-Būthī interprets 'qiwāmah' as the husband's responsibility to protect and nurture the family, not domination over the wife. The husband's leadership is based on his physical advantages and his role as breadwinner, but without demeaning the wife. In essence, wives still have the right to work and contribute economically as long as the work does not burden them.

Keywords: Qiwāmah, al-Būthī, al-Mar'ah

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A. Introduction

The debate on the meaning of *qiwāmah* in QS. an-Nisa [4]:34 tends to be extreme left and extreme right. Researchers usually interpret *qiwāmah* based on their interests, either as pro-feminist or vice versa. There may be a much wiser way, one of which is by reviewing the provisions of the *qiwāmah* issue in QS. an-Nisa [4]:34 through the aspect of the wisdom of the law (*hikmah al-tasyri'*). One of the contemporary scholars offers an interpretation that focuses on the *maqashid al-tasyri* aspect of QS. an-Nisa [4]:34, is Muhammad Sa'id Ramadhān al-Būthī in the book *al-Mar'ah bain Thughyān al-Nidzām al-Gharbiy wa Lathā'if al-Tasyri' al-Rabbaniy*.

Research on male leadership over women has been studied on at least two trends. *Firstly*, character studies. This study discusses the position of women in the household through tafsir theory with a gender approach. The results of this study conclude that although Islam normatively views women as noble and honourable beings, there are interpretations of several Quranic verses on household leadership that are biased partihiarkhi and do not provide a portion of justice for women's rights in the household. In line with the development of science, interpretations have emerged that have a spirit of equality regarding gender relations. Some of the theories of interpretation with a gender perspective approach that the author cites include Muhammad Abduh, Asghar Ali Engineer, Amina

Wadud, and Quraish Shihab.¹ *Second*, research that examines the phenomenon of wives as working parties using the interpretation of m. Quraish Shihab's interpretation of the word *qawwām* in qs. annisa/4:34 and the interpretation of qs. alahzab/33:33. The results of this paper show that M. Quraish Shihab allows wives to work, sometimes even if work is obligatory if the job requires it and he needs the job, with the conditions; with the permission of the husband, the work is done in a respectable, polite atmosphere. To maintain his religion, and can also avoid the negative effects of the work on himself and his environment.²

The purpose of this paper is to analyse Muhammad Sa'id Ramadhān al-Būthī's thoughts on male leadership over women in QS. an-Nisa [4]:34. After the author briefly examines it, this research answers a question, namely, How does Muhammad Sa'id Ramadhān al-Būthī view the verse of qiwāmah?

In the book al–Mar'ah bain Thughyān al–Nidzām al–Gharbiy wa Lathā'if al–Tasyri' al–Rabbaniy, qiwāmah in QS. an–Nisa [4]:34 is explained by Muhammad Sa'id Ramadhān al–Būthī as a form of moral *ideal/duty* and not status/position which is then used as legitimisation for male superiority in the household.

¹ Abdul Jamil Wahab and Ellys Lestari Pambayun, 'TAFSIR THEORY WITH GENDER APPROACH (Study of the Position of Women in the Household)', *Al-Burhan Journal: Study of Science and Development of Qur'anic Culture*, 21 (2021), 13.

² Nur Fadhillah Rahma, 'Working Wives in Al-Quran Perspective Study of M. Quraish Shihab's Interpretation of the Word Qawwam in Qs. An-Nisa/4: 34 and the Interpretation of Qs. Alahzab/33:33', *Anwarul Journal of Education and Da'wah*, 4 (2024), 11.

B. Methodology

To answer the formulation of the problem, this research uses qualitative methods and analyses various sources related to the issue of male leadership over women. The primary sources used are the book *al-Mar'ah bain Thughyān al-Nidzām al-Gharbiy wa Lathā'if al-Tasyri' al-Rabbaniy* and other literature related to the issue of *qiwāmah*. These data are then scrutinised so that there is a common thread, namely the wisdom of determining the law (*hikmah al-tasy'ri'*) on the stipulation of men as *qawwāmun*.

C. The Dynamics of Qiwāmah Interpretation

Technically, the effort to understand the Qur'an is called tafsir. Interpreting the Qur'an is not an easy task because of the complexity and intricacy that exists in it. The redaction of the Qur'anic verses, like all spoken or written texts, can only be fully understood by the owner of the redaction itself. Nevertheless, the interpretation of the Qur'an is still done because it is considered very important.³

History records that the interpretation of the Qur'an has developed since the beginning of the growth of Islam until now. Abdul Mustaqim identifies three phases of the history of Qur'anic interpretation, namely the formative, affirmative and reformative eras, each with its epistemological characteristics. Each new phase criticises the previous tradition. In modern times, some scientific

³ M. Alfatih Suryadilaga et al, *Methodology of Tafsir Science* (Yogyakarta: Teras, 2010).



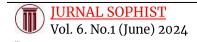
tools, such as hermeneutics, become the main reference in the interpretation of the Qur'an today.⁴

Leadership (*al-Qiwāmah*) is based on the words of Allah Swt. in QS. An-Nisa [4]:34:

"Men (husbands) are responsible for women (wives) because Allah has given some of them (men) more than others (women) and because they (men) have spent some of their wealth."

The above verse is usually explained by classical muftis as an affirmation of the superiority of men over women. All gender injustice can be justified in Islam, precisely because of this verse. This assumption may appear, among others, if we look at the book of *Tafsir al-Jalalain*, the word qawwamun is understood as musallithun (ruler).⁵ The same thing is also mentioned in the interpretation of Majma' al-Bayan fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an by al-Thabrasi which interprets the word qawwamun with musallithun (ruler), but al-Thabrasi adds the information "the man (husband) has power over his wife in terms of managing, educating, training and providing education".⁶ Then the meaning of musallithun is further

⁶ al-Thabrasi, *Majma' Al-Bayan Fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an* (Saudi Arabia: Dar al-'Ulum, 2005).



⁴ Abu al-Qasim Jar Allah al-Zamakhshari, *Al-Kassyāf 'an Haqā'Iq Al-Tanzil Wa 'Uyun Al-Aqāwil Fi Wujuh Al-Ta'Wil* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1977).

⁵ Jalaluddin al-Mahalli and Jalaluddin al-Suyuthi, *Tafsir Al-Jalālain* (Beirut: Dar Ibn Kathir, 1997).

detailed by Wahbah al-Zuhaili as power in a good way, not held in an authoritarian attitude or in an unjust way.⁷

In other literature, we also find Musda Mulia's opinion when interpreting the words al-rijal and al-nisa' on the question of qiwamah. According to her, the letter al in the words al-rijal and al-nisa' has the meaning of 'certain'. Thus, Musda Mulia's interpretation of QS. an-Nisa: 43 is "only men who have certain qualifications can be leaders over certain women". Then, in line with this opinion, Amina Wadud also stated that there are still many who interpret the verse as an indication that is stagnant or unconditional, especially men, people with this kind of understanding understand the word al-rijal in this verse men as a whole. This kind of interpretation, according to her, is very inappropriate, especially considering that in the Qur'an there is not a single verse that clearly states the 'superiority' of men over women, both physically and intellectually.

The word *qawwāmun* is usually interpreted as "responsible, ruler, leader, guardian or protector of women". There are many reasons why the word *qawwāmun* is interpreted this way, for example, it is said to be because men have the advantage of reasoning, perfection of intellect, clarity of mind, maturity in planning, excellence in charity to Allah, determination, and ability

⁷ Wahbah Al-Zuhaili, *Al-Tafsir Al-Munir Fi Al-'Aqidah Wa Al-Syari'ah Wa Al-Manhaj* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1991).

⁸ Siti Musda Mulia, Muslimah Reformasi: Women Religious Reformers (Bandung: Mizan, 2004).

⁹ Amina Wadud, Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

to write.¹⁰ The reason is that in some classical mufasir's view, through this *afdhaliyah* on men is the task of prophethood, scholars, imams and the like. Men also play a role in jihad, adhan, prayer imam, khutbah, testimony, guardianship of marriage to the right of divorce and reconciliation, while women do not. Theologically, the superiority of men over women is becoming stronger and this is what feminists argue is a factor in the emergence of the assumption that the public sphere ultimately belongs to men, while women can only play a role in the domestic sphere.¹¹ It is this classical mufasir view that has recently been challenged by feminist scholars of women's issues.¹²

At-Thabari quoted a narration from Ibn Abbas that the meaning of the verse *qiwāmah* is the command to women to obey men in what Allah has commanded. Such obedience is in the form of doing good to the husband's family and protecting the husband's property. Moreover, at-Thabari also quoted a narration from az-Zuhri who stated that there is no qishash for husbands and wives other than murder. He even said that if a man mistreats his wife or injures her, then he is not subject to retaliation (qishash) for this,

¹⁰ Afifuddin Dimyathi, *Hidayat Al-Qur'an Fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an Bi Al-Qur'an*, Dar al-Nib (Cairo, 2023).

¹¹ Mansour Fakih, Gender Analysis and Social Transformation (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1996).

¹² Abdul Mustaqim, Paraigma Tafsir Gender: Reading the Qur'an with Women's Optics (A Study of Riffat Hasan's Thought on Gender Issues in Islam) (Yogyakarta: Logung Pustaka, 2009).

unless he attacks and kills his wife, then he gets a qishash punishment.¹³

Al-Qurthubi in his tafsir explains tafdhil (advantages) owned by men is in the form of superiority in physical strength and character that is not owned by women. Because the male temperament tends to be passionate and hard. While women's character tends to be cool and gentle, which can be interpreted emotionally women are more sensitive, especially in terms of feelings. Therefore, Allah swt. made men as qawwāmun over women. This verse also shows the obligation of men to educate their wives, but when the wife has maintained the rights of the husband, the husband is not allowed to treat his wife badly. According to al-Qurthubi, the word qawwām is a shighah mubālaghah which means to stand up for something fully and take care of it seriously. As it relates to household issues, gawwām based on this definition is a man leading his wife by taking care of her and educating her. In addition, the *qiwāmah* (leadership) of men over women is also related to the maintenance that must be borne by the husband. In this case, the scholars understand this verse to mean that if the husband is unable to provide for his wife, then there is no *qawwām* (leadership) of the husband over his wife, and if the husband's *qawwām* over his wife no longer exists, then it is permissible for the wife to sue for divorce from her marriage because the purpose of marriage is lost. From the above, it appears that there is clear evidence for annulment of marriage when there is

¹³ Al-Thabari, *Tafsir Al-Thabari Jami' Al-Bayan 'an Ta'Wil Ay Qur'an* (Dar Hajr li al-Thaba'ah, 2001).

difficulty in fulfilling the husband's maintenance to his wife, which is the opinion of Malik and as-Shafi'i.¹⁴

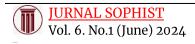
D. Biography of Muhammad Sa'id Ramadhān Al-Būthī

Muhammad Sa'īd Ramadhān al-Būthī was born in 1929 in the village of Jilīka, Turkey. He came from an intelligent and religious Kurdish family. At the age of four, al-Būthī and his family moved to Damascus in 1933 to escape Kemal Ataturk's slander and persecution of Muslims after the collapse of the Ottoman Turkish Caliphate. His mother passed away when he was 13 years old, and his father remarried a Turkish woman who brought him close to the Turkish language in addition to Kurdish and Arabic.¹⁵

Since childhood, al-Būthī's intelligence was already apparent. In less than a year al-Būthī was able to memorise around 1002 stanzas of *Alfiyah Ibn Mālik* and Abu Shuja's *Nazhm Ghāyah at-Taqrīb*. Although he had intended to memorise the Qur'ān, his father did not allow him to do so, fearing that if he forgot it, it would be a sin. Remembering his father's advice, al-Būthī chose to memorise the Qur'ān every three days and regularly studied Qur'ānic commentaries with his father.

After completing primary school, al-Būthī continued his education at Ma'had at-Taujīh al-Islāmī under the guidance of Shaykh Hasan Habanakah al-Maydānī, a great Syrian scholar and

¹⁵ Muhammad Mufid, Learning From : Three Phenomenal and Inspirational Sham Scholars (Jakarta: PT Elex Media Komputindo, 2015).



¹⁴ Al-Qurthubi, *Tafsir Al-Jami' Li Ahkam Al-Qur'an* (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Mishriyah, 1964).

tafsir expert. After graduating from secondary education in 1953, al-Būthī continued his studies at al-Azhar University, Cairo, and earned a bachelor's degree in the Faculty of Shari'ah in 1955. A year later, he obtained a diploma of education in Arabic Language (S-2 equivalent) in a short period. In 1965, he earned his doctorate in fiqh and ushūl fiqh from al-Azhar University with a dissertation entitled "Dhawâbith Al-Mashlahah fi Ash-Sharî'ah Al-Islâmiyyah" and graduated Summa Cum Laude. ¹⁶

Al-Būthī began his career as a religious teacher in secondary schools and Dār al-Mu'allimīn ībtidā'iyyah in Hims. Then, in 1960, he was appointed as an assistant lecturer at the Faculty of Shari'ah of Damascus University on the recommendation of Shaykh Mustafa as-Sibā'ī. After obtaining his doctorate, he became a permanent lecturer at Damascus University, teaching comparative law (al-Fiqh al-Islāmī al-Muqārin) and religious studies (al-'Aqā'id wa al-Adyān).

In 1975, al-Būthī was appointed Professor in the field of crossmethod fiqh studies (*al-Fiqh al-Muqāran*). Two years later, he was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Shari'ah. From 2002 until near the end of his life, al-Būthī also served as Director of Theological and Religious Studies at Damascus University.¹⁷ On the evening of Friday, 21 March 2013 (9 Jumadil Awal 1434 AH), al-Būthī was killed by a suicide bombing carried out by Syrian extremists at al-Imān

¹⁶ Abdul Mukit, 'Akidah Education: A Study of Muhammad Sa'īd Ramadhān Al-Būthī's Thought', *Tawazun: Journal of Islamic Education*, 1 (2015).

 $^{^{\}rm 17}$ Abdul Mukit, Akidah Education: A Study of the Thought of Muhammad Sa'īd Ramadhān al- Būthī..., p. 6.

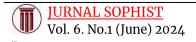
Mosque, Damascus, while he was giving his weekly tafsir lecture. Al-Būthī was buried near the tomb of King Shalah ad-Dīn al-Ayyūbī under the citadel of Damascus.¹⁸

E. Kitab Al-Mar'ah Bain Thughyān Al-Nidzām Al-Gharbiy wa Lathā'if Al-Tasyri' Al-Rabbaniy

The writing of al-Mar'ah baina Thughyān an-Nidzām wa Lathā'if al-Tasyri' al-Rabbaniy stemmed from al-Būthī's concern over the fate of western women at the time, who had been deceived by a system that essentially enslaved them under the guise of 'equality'. In general, the themes presented by al-Būthī revolve around the title 'the status of women in Islam'. The aim is to refute the issues that have been claimed by westerners that Islam has ignored the status of women and squandered their rights. If we look at pre-Islamic history, the status of women is very neglected, where women in the jahiliyyah period became degraded figures, until at the end of this book al-Būthī mentions pre-Islamic customs that are very far from the guidance of Islamic law.¹⁹ Islam was present to honour women, such as in the issue of qiwāmah, which the author examines in this article.

Kitab al-Mar'ah baina Thughyān an-Nidzām wa Lathā'if al-Tasyri' al-Rabbaniy discusses several issues related to women's issues, including women's rights and obligations in Islamic and Western systems, women's position in Islam, musāwāh (equality), qiwāmah

¹⁹ Muhammad Sa'id Ramadhan al-Būthī, *Al-Mar'ah Bain Thughyān Al-Nidzām Al-Gharbiy Wa Lathā'if Al-Tasyri' Al-Rabbaniy* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2023).



¹⁸ Muhammad Mufid, Learning from : Three Phenomenal and Inspirational Sham Scholars..., pp. 86-87

(leadership), mirāts (inheritance), nusyuz, polygamy, female testimony, hijab, mauhimah (imaginative) hadiths.

F. Qiwāmah Perspective of Muhammad Sa'id Ramadhān Al-Būthī in Al-Mar'ah Bain Thughyān Al-Nidzām Al-Gharbiy wa Lathā'if Al-Tasyri' Al-Rabbaniy

After the author has presented some of the mufasir's opinions on the meaning of qiwāmah, al-Būthī comes up with a moderate interpretation of the issue of male leadership over women. al-Būthī explains in his book that *qiwāmah* refers to leadership related to the husband's responsibility in managing, educating, and nurturing his wife. Not authoritarian leadership.²⁰

Even Abdul Mustaqim in his book al-Tafsir al-Maqashidi states that women and men have the same rights and are allowed to be leaders as long as they meet the absolute requirements of who has the potential (ability/capability), support and defence in holding responsibility. This is based on the absence of a single verse in the Qur'an that prohibits women as imams (leaders).21

Ramadhan al-Būthī specifically addresses those who claim that Islam is very unfair by excluding women and also removing their rights in terms of leadership, according to al-Būthī this kind of view is fairly narrow. The word *qawwām*, which is often interpreted as a leader in the verse, does not necessarily legitimise the exclusivity of men over women. Al-Būthī explains the meaning of

²¹ Abdul *Mustaqim*(Indonesia: Dar al-Fikrah, 2022).



²⁰ Muhammad Sa'id Ramadhan al-Būthī, al-Mar'ah baina Thughyān an-Nidzām wa Lathā'if al-Tasyri' al-Rabbaniy..., p. 97.

qawwām in QS. An-Nisa [4]: 34 as everything related to leadership and managerial matters. He analogises this leadership to someone who is given the responsibility to lead a foundation/institution, so he must maintain and manage the foundation as well as possible. In another interpretation, al-Būthī states that the spirit of the verse is to prevent a vacuum of leadership in a community.²² The Prophet said, "*If three people go on a journey, appoint one of them as leader*".²³ The hadith is then used as a guide related to the issue of leadership in every association, even in the issue of *safar* (travel) though.

Furthermore, it is necessary to deeply understand the meaning of the hadith above, namely that to become a leader someone does not have to be from the party/group of the highest position. However, the fundamental standard is how the leader is a person who can hold and carry out the responsibility. Thus, the leadership of men over women in the household is not an indicator of one's superiority, but rather his ability to hold the responsibility as head of the household. In addition, the claim that the verse *qiwamah* legitimises the superiority of men over women is irrelevant, given the many verses of the Qur'an that affirm that men and women are equal in the reality of humanity. The superiority of both lies only in piety and how much their deeds are in the sight of Allah, as found in

²² Muhammad Sa'id Ramadhan al-Būthī, al-Mar'ah baina Thughyān an-Nidzām wa Lathā'if al-Tasyri' al-Rabbaniy..., p. 98.

²³ The hadith reads " اإذا كان ثلاثة فَيُ سفّر فليؤمروا أحدهم! It was narrated by Baihaqi, Ahmad, Hakim, and Daru quthni from Abu Hurairah.

QS. Ali Imran: 195; An-Nisa: 124; An-Nahl: 97; al-Ahzāb: 35, and al-Hujurat: 13.²⁴

Continuing with the verse "bi mā fadhdhalallāh ba'dhuhum 'ala ba'dh", al-Bu interpreted it as emphasising the harmony between the benefits and duties assigned by Allah swt.²⁵ The roles and responsibilities of men and women differ from one another according to their respective physical and psychological anatomical structures. In Islamic sharia, men are assigned as leaders in proportion to their responsibilities towards the fulfilment of maintenance, dowry, and other things that are naturally more in line with their courageous character. Meanwhile, women, with their gentle hearts, become a shelter for their husbands and children.

With strong physical and psychological anatomical structures, men are considered more competent and suitable to be charged with leading, organising family affairs and maintaining their survival by providing a living. Whereas women, with their gentle physical and psychological anatomical structures, are considered more competent and suitable to be charged with the task of caring, breastfeeding, and educating children and creating happiness in the household. These duties and roles of men are as important as those of women.²⁶ It is from this understanding that al-Būthī's *ideal moral* paradigm on the issue of *qiwamah* emerges, that men's

²⁴ Muhammad Sa'id Ramadhan al-Būthī, al-Mar'ah baina Thughyān an-Nidzām wa Lathā'if al-Tasyri' al-Rabbaniy..., p. 100.

²⁵ Muhammad Sa'id Ramadhan al-Būthī, *al-Mar'ah baina Thughyān an-Nidzām wa Lathā'if al-Tasyri' al-Rabbaniy...*, p. 101.

²⁶ Muhammad Sa'id Ramadhan al-Būthī, al-Mar'ah baina Thughyān an-Nidzām wa Lathā'if al-Tasyri' al-Rabbaniy..., p. 102.

leadership over women in the household should always be seen as a great responsibility, not as a justification for demeaning women. Even in classical books, it is clearly stated that if a man is unable to carry out his responsibilities as a husband, such as providing for his wife and children, then the *qiwamah* status is cancelled.²⁷

Then, concerning the issue of women's right to work, al-Būthī again views it using *maqashid* glasses. According to him, the provision of *qiwamah* stipulated in QS. an-Nisa [4]: 34 is a very harmonious concept. If the spirit of equality departs from the views and traditions of western society, then al-Būthī regrets this because women in Islam are precisely the parties that must be guarded and protected, therefore al-Būthī allows a wife to work as long as it does not burden her. ²⁸

After the author has elaborated on the explanation above, the author finally agrees that the Qur'an explicitly states that there are types that distinguish men and women based on two principles that justify these differences fairly. Namely, the principle of natural endowment and the principle of responsibility. That *tafdhil* (advantages) between men and women are needed to fulfil their respective duties. Issues related to equality will not be resolved if humans do not recognise the existence of natural differences that are inevitable. That is, men carry out men's work, and women also carry out duties as women. Thus, the "kingdom" of women lies

²⁷ Al-Zuhaili, *Tafsir al-Munir...*, p. 53.

²⁸ Muhammad Sa'id Ramadhan al-Būthī, *Qadhaya Fiqhiyah Mu'ashirah* (Damascus: Maktabah al-Farabi, 1999), Volume 2, pp. 199.

within the household, while the "kingdom" of men is in the struggle of life.²⁹

G. CONCLUSIONS

In al-Mar'ah bain Thughyān al-Nidzām al-Gharbiy wa Lathā'if al-Tasyri' al-Rabbaniy, Ramadhan al-Būthī explains giwāmah in QS. an-Nisa [4]:34 as an ideal form of morality and responsibility, not as a status or position that can be used to legitimise male superiority in the household. Based on this explanation, the author concludes the thoughts of Ramadhan al-Būthī, among others; First, *Qawwāmun* (male leadership) is not interpreted as the husband's domination over his wife, but rather as the husband's responsibility to protect, nurture, and ensure a good family life. Secondly, the husband's leadership is based on two things: the physical advantages that men generally have and the husband's role as breadwinner. However, these advantages are not a reason to patronise women. Thirdly, the husband's obligation to provide for his wife does not make her a subordinate party. The wife has the right to work and contribute economically to the family as long as it does not burden her.

²⁹ Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad, *Al-Falsafah Al-Qur'aniyah* (Saudi Arabia: al-Nasyir Mu'assasah Handawiy, 2017).

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