ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Methodology of Al-Marbawi In The Interpretation of Al Quran: A Study on Tafsir Al-Marbawi Juzuk Alif Lam Mim

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ABSTRACT

The history of Islam in Malaysia is a huge topic to be discussed especially when it comes to the arrival of Islam in all its fourteen states. Although the arrival of Islam in Perak was slightly late compared to the rest of the states in Malaysia, yet the fame of Islam that was just arrived able to be accepted by local community to produce a number of scholars who served and honor to be remembered until now. This paper aims to discuss the contribution of Syeikh Mohd Idris bin ÑAbdul Rauf al-Marbawi through his writing. His contribution has won a recognition from the federal government, where he was awarded as the figure of Maal Hijrah in 1987 at the age of 95. His work, Tafsir al-Marbawi Surah Alif Lam Mim is very significant to the past Muslim community due to its contents and a very clear argument. Although now many books of commentary produced a new look and suitable for the present yet the old books of interpretation contain more significant discussion.

Key words: Tafsir, Al-Marbawi, Alif Lam Mim, Methodology.

Introduction

Muhd Idris bin ÑAbdul Rauf al-Marbawi and only referred as Idris al-Marbawi because al-Marbawi is in conjunction with the name of his descendants. Late al-Syeikh Mohd Idris bin ÑAbdul Rauf al-Marbawi was a great scholar who is no stranger. His fame is not only in the Archipelago but also in Egypt and Mecca especially in the field of Arabic language, hadith, tafsir and fiqh.

Syeikh Mohd Idris bin ÑAbdul Rauf al-Marbawi was born on 28 Zulkaedah 1313 Hijrah equivalent to 1893 AD in Makkah al-Mukarramah. At the age of 10 years, he was able to memorize a total of 10 constituents while several other books. In year 1333 Hijrah/1913AD, he returned home with his family. Returning home, he was educated first at Sekolah Melayu Lubuk Merbau, Perak. Next, he was pursuing graduate studies at several pondok schools such as Sekolah Pondok Syeikh Wan Muhammad in Bukit Chandan, Kuala Kangsar, Pondok Tuan Hussain al-MasÑudi in Kedah, Pondok Syeikh Ahmad Fatani in Bukit Mertajam and Pondok Tok Kenali in Kelantan. Upon graduation, Syeikh Mohd Idris al-Marbawi worked as a religious teacher in Perak (Tajuddin Saman 1993: 78).

In 1924, he was studying at Al-Azhar University in Egypt and got High Degree. Then, he began to compile the Arabic/Malay dictionary or more recognizable as Kamus Idris al-Marbawi, published in 1937. Until now, the dictionary has been printed repeatedly, not less than 24 times. Then start from here, he continued to explore the challenging in writing. The book, entitled ‘Bahrul Mazi’ were discussing about 8200 religious issues and the relationship between the life of the Hereafter. He also produced several books of tafsir al-Quran in Malay Language. Among these are Tafsir Quran Marbawi, Tafsir Quran Nurul –Yaqin and Tafsir Surah Yasssin. S

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Besides that, there a few publication which are entitled Bulughul Maram, Muṣjam al-Kaṣнат, Jamīṣul Ulum, Usul al-Islam and Nizamul Hayah (Tajuddin Saman 1993: 80).

All the books written by Syeikh Mohd Idris bin ŃAbdul Rauf al-Marbawi enrich the precious Islamic heritage in the Archipelago and expose the intellectuality of Muslim community. Due to the contributions and prospects in the field of religion and literature, on 5 July 1980, Late Syeikh Mohd Idris al-Marbawi was awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Philosophy by National University of Malaysia. Award bestowed by the Chancellor of National University Malaysia, Tunku Ja’far Ibni al-Marhum Tuanku Abdul Rahman during convocation. At that time, he was 86 years old and was recorded as a scholar who has produced 21 works in various aspects of Islam (Tajuddin Saman 1993: 81).

While in 1987, dated 1 Muharram 1908H in Muslim calendar, he was enthroned as the first Maal Hijrah National Figure based on contributions and high knowledge of Islam in the archipelago, especially in Malaysia. Syeikh Mohd Idris al-Marbawi also received a cash prize of RM 40000, a medal and certificate. The prize was presented by the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohammad in a ceremony Maal Hijrah celebration, in front of approximately 3000 people were present, including ambassadors from Islamic countries, in the Islamic Centre Kuala Lumpur. When receiving the award, the Maal Hijrah figure was 95 years old (Tajuddin Saman 1993: 81).

He died shortly after receiving the award. The late leave a child, three grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. He was buried in the Muslim cemetery in Kampung Lubuk Merbau that is next to the grave of his first wife Hajjah Khadijah bt. Mohd Edham. His departure is still remembered and his name is commemorated by the Muslim society either young or elderly. The great and significant contribution by him was the Kamus Al-Marbawi. This dictionary continues to be remembered and used by students in any kind of study either high or low levels and can be seen up to now (Tajuddin Saman 1993: 81).

Materials and Methods

This study is focusing on the book written by Idris al-Marbawi, called Kitab Tafsir Quran Marbawi: Juzuk أﻟﻢ. In dealing with this book, some methodologies are applied. Such methodologies are collecting the documents related to the history of Idris al-Marbawi and his contribution in spreading the teaching of Islam, particularly in Perak. Then, while focusing on his particular book, certain texts are analyzed analytically and critically in order to explore the writer’s methodology when producing the book.

Results and Discussion

Kitab Tafsir Quran Marbawi: Juzuk أﻟﻢ

This commentary book is one of the books written by Idris al-Marbawi. If studied the commentaries and reviews provided by him, the explanation in the books is concise. This book is written in old jawi and use the old Malay language. Author started the writing with the interpretation of the verses of Surah al-Fatihah from beginning to end. If we looked to the other commentary books, the way of the interpretation almost same which must be preceded by the verses in Surah al-Fatihah first. This is because we know that Surah al-Fatihah is the head of the chapters. It must come before the interpretation of the next chapter.

This book may be produced when he was in Egypt and published in Safar 1357, equivalent to April 1938 and printed in the city of Cairo Egypt Tafsir al-Marbawi contains 203 pages.

Tafsir al-Marbawi is not as the normal commentary books. Author of the book merely gives the descriptions and arguments of a verse in compact adequate to give understanding to the reader. The author write each verse with a number, same as in al-Quran and describe the whole meaning of the interpreted verse. This has been explained and provided examples on the above methodology. Besides, in a review of this book, the author does not specify the literal meaning in every word for each interpreted verse but only make descriptions and reviews on the Malay interpretation meaning. The author also gives another meaning for the original and described the interpreted verse. Example of Surah al-Baqarah verse 18:

(ضرَّعُونَ ﻻ ﻓَهُمْ ﻋُﻤْﻲٌ ﺑُﻜْﻢٌ ﻟُﻤْ) 18

“They are deaf, dumb and blind, so they return not (to the right path)”.

The author connotes deaf as a turn for the hypocrites from hearing the truth. Mute with broken tongues meaning for those who do not know to refuse the truth by tongue arguments and didn’t speak the truth. While the blind is not looking with eyes and think of eyes looked on the right and to distinguish between right and wrong. (al-Marbawi 1938: 16). This is so-called language interpretation.

In addition, the author has listed the contents of the verse from the first juzuk to the third juzuk together with the introduction page of the book, which all the three constituents have been interpreted properly. This facilitates the readers to refer the verse interpretation directly. In the introduction of Tafsir Quran Marbawi, the author gives a word of introduction for the book by writing the benefits of the book which are:
Al-Quran is the word of Allah. No doubt for one of the many secrets of life and the hereafter with happiness in it.

If a student does not know or forgot obscure in meaning one word or a Quranic verse, with this book InshaAllah he can remember what he forgot and clarify the ambiguity of meaning.

Verses of al-Quran are sometimes related to one another in various parts. Thus, this book serves to interpret the related verses and chapters.

Some of the Quranic verses do not preach something clearly. Therefore, there are other verses to explain and clarify them. This tafsir reveals places of the verse which clarify the ambiguous verses.

History, the advice and lessons, the reasons of revelation and provisions of the jurisprudential are available for every verse which is related to the respective verse. (al-Marbawi 1938: b).

Moreover, the author also writes the methodology of using the book which are:

If someone wants to find the interpretation of a verse or a word, first, look at the dictionary of Quranic verse that is or others. Look for number of the wanted verse. In what chapter? Then look the page of the verses commentary content and in which juzuk?

If readers find these words, “see Surah al-Baqarah verse 45” in this book, they should reviewed because sometimes the interpretation is further explained or Quranic verse increases the understanding or related methodology between two verses.

The references of the tafsir are, نسفي, ابن عباس, جلال الدين فخر الرزازي, بيضاوی and others. If one looks at the tafsir he will find them in the mentioned tafsir. (al-Marbawi 1938).

Most reviews based on verses that are interpreted as the prevailing story in verse as well as the reasons of revelation. The author rarely makes his own comments but at some needed places only. This is because, the debate in this book is simple. Yet, through the mentioned stories are enough in understanding each interpreted verse.

The author urges that the reader always obedient, faithful and believes in Allah and the Prophet Muhammad because He is the Most Powerful over something, either goodness or evil as stories that linked to a revealed verse, example of verse 40 Surah al-Baqarah. The author said in this book:

“Ao all brothers! Allah gives advice to the Jews. But it is not only to Jews alone. It is a lesson to all believers from the Prophet Muhammad people”.

As if the point:

“Ao all Muslim’s people should remember the favor which I bestowed on you all that you can worship as I am for taking interest. Thus you all should remember Allah’s bounty and express gratitude by implementing the commandments and avoiding prohibitions thus would be saved in the world and the hereafter. Don’t be like some Jews, who not ever receive the advice from al-Quran and the Messenger of Allah and they did not believe them” (al-Marbawi 1938: 40).

Most of reviews in this book is a story and it is contained in the verses which are interpreted. Not much argument about the rulings except the laws that have been issued in the verse. The author only further clarify the verdicts by relating the stories from the verse. In addition, he not to opposed the issue from the members of Ta’wil (interpretation).

The book produced by Syeikh Mohd Idris bin ÑAbdul Rauf al-Marbawi has its own way and methodology. Thus, it is important for us to know the methodology used by the respective scholar. This tafsir has way of argument same as Tafsir Surah Yasin, yet much simpler. This second book also present a more detail debate, which each word has law of tajwid and Arabic grammar.

In the introduction of Tafsir Quran Marbawi, the author gives a word of introduction for the book by writing the benefits of the book and its methods. Next, he had listed the contents of the Quranic verses Surah al-Baqarah for juzuk together with its page. This facilitates the readers to refer to each verse that is interpreted by him. The author also had also listed a few matters that are interpreted by him in juzuk altogether with its page for the convenience of book referee (al-Marbawi 1938: 3).

Although the tafsir named as Kitab Tafsir Marbawi: Juzuk, it is not only interpret Juzuk but also interpreted verses from al-Fatihah until the third juzuk, named juzuk. As the first juzuk, the second and third juzuk also included the contents of the verses and the discussed matter in the verses, together with their pages.

Methodology used by the author in Kitab Tafsir Marbawi is to write each Quranic verse based on verse sequence as in al-Quran and on the left side of the verse, the whole meaning has been written in Malay language. After that, the author comment and explain the verse that has given meaning at the bottom of the verse. In each interpreted verse, the author writes the number of the Quranic verse first on the right side. This is important to assist the readers to refer to the original text of al-Quran and other commentary books. Example of verse 3, al Baqarah

اﻟﺮﺣﻤﻦ اﻟﺮﺣﻴﻢ

Means: “The Most Gracious the Most Merciful”.

Love and mercy of Allah are not the alike as human love. Thus the place of human love is the heart. And Allah is not heartless.

Interpretation of al-Quran by al-Quran

In the given explanation, the author also write other Quranic verses as support and evidence towards the interpreted verse. Each Quranic argument is the main reference in each issue. Refer to the mind and the conjecture without reference to the main sources of Islamic laws such arguments would be exposed to fraud except that it requires further rational mind and based on sound of knowledge in Islam. Example of verse reviewed by the author to put the argument of al-Quran as supporter, like verse 2 Surah al-Fatihah:

"All the praises and thanks are to Allah, the Lord of the universe".

Imagine praising God by saying ‘AlhamduLillah’, as God praised himself, then you obtain double bounties and reward, as Allah’s word in verse 7 Surah Ibrahim:

"If you give thanks (by accepting Faith and worshipping none but Allah), I will give you more (of My Blessings). The verse of al-Quran is alike a supporter and a more complete explanation of the interpreted verse" (al-Marbawi 1938: 2-3).

Interpretation by the Opinions of the Companions

For every description of the interpreted verse, the author commented are clear, simple and it is enough to give understanding to the reader in every verse. This is also congruent with the public who want a simpler explanation but packed with knowledge. However, based on the research of this book, there is no hadith used as a review in the description. The author didn’t include the saying of the Prophet but the words of the Caliph are written as an explanation of the verse and tell a story that happened as the reason of revelation. Example of verse 173 Surah al-Baqarah:

إِنَّا حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالْمُسْتَقَرَّ وَالْخَنزِيرَ

“He has forbidden you only the dead animals and blood and the flesh of swine”.

From the verse, Sayyidina Ali said: “When all of you hear Jews and Christians slaughter for other than Allah thus you should not eat and when slaughter for Allah, so eat”. With this, author sets a law of Allah with what happened on the Jews (al-Marbawi 1938: 120).

Another example which is included the companion’s opinion is when he interprets the word of Allah in verse 99 Surah al-Baqarah:

ولَقدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ أَبْنَاتِ يَبْتَلَئَاتٍ وَمَا يَكَفُّكَهَا إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَشْرَكْنَاهَا

“And indeed We have sent down to you manifest verse (these verses of the Quran which inform in detail about the news of the Jews and their secret intentions) and none disbelieve in them but fasiqun (those who rebel against Allah’s Command).

In this case, the words of Ibnu Abbas are quoted: “This verse was revealed to answer the Jewish ecclesiastic which he said none of the verses that you have bring to us. O Muhammad! from your God, so that we follow”. Thus, Allah answered through his words, which means:

“We have indeed revealed several verses of the revelation brought by Jibril hath the verse which describes lawful and unlawful and all rulings. There is no default for the revelation of the verse but those who really evil” (al-Marbawi 1938: 75).

Interpretation based on Reasons of Revelation

The author also brings the reasons of revelation for some related verses. This facilitates the readers to understand the meaning of the verse and the events behind the revelation of the verse, for example, when interpreting verse 142 Surah al-Baqarah:

سيقولُ السَّفِهَاءُ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَا وَلَاهُمُ عَنْ فِيْتَهُمُ الَّتِي كَانَوا عَلَيْهَا قَالَ إِنِّي لَهُ الْمَشْرَقُ وَالْمَغْرَبُ يَهْدِي مِنْ يَتَابَعُ إِلَى صَرَاطٍ مَّسْتَقِيمٍ

“The fools (pagans, hypocrites and Jews) among the people will say, “what has turned them (Muslim) from their Qiblah (prayer direction towards Jerusalem) to which they used to face in prayer”. Say, (O Muhammad) “To Allah belong both, east and the west. He guides whom He wills to the Straight Way”.

Based on the above verse, the author has explained the reason of the revelation which is addressed to Jews and disbelievers. They ask why the Prophet Muhammad and his followers turned and used Kaabah as kiblah, not the Masjid al-Aqsa. Due to the event ,the verse states the truth order of Allah to used Kaabah as kiblah in Mecca (al-Marbawi 1938: 101).

Interpretation the law verses

In this tafsir, the author also interprets many legal verses and faith in the interpreted constituents. For example Allah’s words in verse 173, Surah al-Baqarah:

إِنَّا حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالْمُسْتَقَرَّ وَالْخَنزِيرَ وَما أَهْلَهُ بِالْغَيْرِ إِبَّانَاهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَرَادُونَ إِلَّا ما تَرَاهُمْ رُحُومٗ

“He has forbidden you only the dead animals and blood and the flesh of swine and that which is slaughtered as a sacrifice for others than Allah (or has been slaughtered for idols, on which Allah’s name has not been mentioned while slaughtering). But if one is forced by necessity without willful disobedience nor transgressing due to limits, then there is no sin on him. Truly Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful”. 
Based on the above verse, the author would like to clarify that Allah forbid eating the dead animals and blood and the flesh of swine, as well as slaughtering which mentioned other than Allah’s name. The author also briefly describes the time one has to eat things forbidden by Allah (al-Marbawi 1938: 120). Even when he interprets verse 115, Surah al-Baqarah:

وَإِنَّهُ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ رَابِعًا عَلَىٰ عَلِيمٍ

“And to Allah belong the east and the west, so wherever you turn (yourselves or your faces) there is the face of Allah. Surely, Allah is All-Sufficient for His creatures’ needs, All-Knowing”.

According to him, the scholars have issued a legal of Qiblah from the verse and others, those who are travelling in the wilderness or non-Muslim state, suddenly questions about the direction of Qiblah, he may practice *ijtihad* of any decree. Then pray with his *ijtihad*. Prayer must be made up even if the direction is not corrected. Similarly, one who capsized in the ocean, then gets a board, he should pray on it and the prayer is ruled as valid. Likewise, the law of prayer of which is fastened to a stick in the event and not facing the Qiblah (al-Marbawi 1938: 86).

**Conclusion:**

In this *tafsir*, he explained some figurative language in Malay Language such as likened a description to something to explain the real meaning. This is also to beautify the debate and reviews. For example in verse 19, Surah al-Baqarah:

أُوْلَٰئِكُمُ الْمُكْرِهُونَ فِيهِمْ فِئَاتٌ وَرَبَّٰئَا وَبَرْقٌ نَّجْعُوهُمْ فِيهِمْ وَمَتْ نَّجْعُوهُمْ فِيهِمْ

“Or like a rainstorm from the sky, where in darkness, thunder and lightning. They thrust their fingers in their ears to keep out the stunning thunderclap for fear of death. But Allah ever encompasses the disbelievers”. (i.e. Allah will gather them together).

In this verse, the author commented the meaning by equating the rainstorm is like faith and al-Quran. Darkness, thunder and lightning are like incriminating matters of prayer, fasting and leave the religion. He explained, they thrust their fingers in their ears and those who hear Allah’s call but do not want to follow Him and turn away from Him, will not know yet they are fully aware. The author explains in his commentary that Muslim can be hypocrites when they accept the teachings of Allah but not execute the order of Allah.(al-Marbawi 1938: 17).

**References**


