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A Hypothetical Reconstruction of the Lost Qur'ānic Commentary of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) (Part 1)[1]

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Abstract:

This article constitutes the first section *of a two-part study designed to form a single, coherent work on a hypothetical reconstruction of the lost Qur'ānic commentary of al-Suyūṭī, Majma' al-Baḥrayn wa Maṭla' al-Badrayn. The present part serves as an introduction, offering a critical investigation into the scholarly persona of the Egyptian polymath of the Burjī Mamlūk period. It focuses particularly on the complexity of his intellectual persona as a prolific author, followed by an examination of how he conceived of himself as a Qur'anic exegete and how transmitted reports (riwāyāt) occupied a position of high authority within his exegetical framework. Al-Suyūṭī engaged in intense scholarly confrontations with his contemporaries, most notably al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497), which involved accusations of plagiarism and sharp criticism of his intellectual methods. Conversely, his defense of Sufi figures such as Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240) against charges of takfīr reveals a pronounced spiritual inclination, an aspect often overshadowed by his image*

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as a muḥaddith–cum–exegete employing a radical report-based method in al-Durr al-Manthūr. Within the broader field of Qur'ānic exegesis, al-Suyūṭī is generally recognized through five works: al-Itqān, al-Durr al-Manthūr, Qaṭf al-Azhār, Nawāhid al-Abkār, and the first part of Tafsīr al-Jalālayn. We argue that only when these five works are considered collectively can one begin to apprehend the ambitious and comprehensive exegetical project that reflects al-Suyūṭī's original scholarly vision.

[Artikel ini merupakan bagian pertama dari sebuah kajian dua bagian yang dirancang untuk membentuk satu karya utuh dan koheren mengenai rekonstruksi hipotetis atas tafsir al-Qur'an karya al-Suyūṭī yang telah hilang, Majmaʿ al-Baḥrayn wa Maṭlaʿ al-Badrayn. Bagian ini berfungsi sebagai pendahuluan dengan menyajikan telaah kritis terhadap sosok intelektual polymath Mesir pada periode Mamlūk Burjī tersebut. Kajian ini secara khusus menyoroti kompleksitas persona intelektualnya sebagai seorang penulis yang sangat produktif, diikuti dengan pembahasan mengenai bagaimana ia memandang dirinya sebagai seorang mufasir al-Qur'an serta bagaimana riwayat-riwayat transmisi (riwāyāt) menempati posisi otoritatif dalam kerangka penafsirannya. Al-Suyūṭī terlibat dalam berbagai konfrontasi ilmiah yang intens dengan para cendekiawan sezamannya, terutama dengan al-Sakhāwī (w. 902/1497), yang mencakup tuduhan plagiarisme serta kritik tajam terhadap metode intelektualnya. Di sisi lain, pembelaannya terhadap tokoh-tokoh sufi seperti Ibn ʿArabī (w. 638/1240) dari tuduhan takfīr menunjukkan kecenderungan spiritual yang kuat, suatu aspek yang kerap terabaikan oleh citranya sebagai seorang muḥaddith sekaligus mufasir yang menerapkan metode penafsiran berbasis riwayat secara radikal dalam al-Durr al-Manthūr. Dalam ranah tafsir al-Qur'an yang lebih luas, al-Suyūṭī umumnya dikenal melalui lima karya utama: al-Itqān, al-Durr al-Manthūr, Qaṭf al-Azhār, Nawāhid al-Abkār, dan bagian pertama dari Tafsīr al-Jalālayn. Kami berargumen bahwa hanya dengan mempertimbangkan kelima karya tersebut secara kolektif, seseorang dapat mulai memahami proyek tafsir yang ambisius dan komprehensif, yang mencerminkan visi intelektual orisinal al-Suyūṭī.]

Keywords: al-Suyūṭī, lost Qur'anic mommentary, polymath

A. A Model Persona: From Academic and Bureaucrat to Sufi

Ninth-century Cairo, under the rule of the Circassian Mamluks, emerged as a vibrant centre of Islamic learning. The high regard for

scholars was reflected in the social hierarchy that developed: *arbāb al-qalam* (state officials, jurists, scholars, literary figures, and writers), the military elite, and the general populace (merchants, professionals, artisans, peasants, and the indigent). Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī (d. 926), for example, once openly criticized the policies of Sultan Qaitbay (d. 901) from the pulpit while seated before him. Rather than punishing him after the prayer, the young sultan instead kissed al-Anṣārī's hand,[2] indicating a symbolic balance between military power and religious knowledge that structured governance in Cairo at that time, and that the legitimacy of the Mamluk sultans was closely tied to the moral authority of the '*ulamā*'. It was within this politically and culturally dynamic environment that Jalāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭī was born—shortly after sunset at the beginning of Rajab 849/1445[3]—from a father named Kamāl al-Dīn Abū Bakr b. Naṣīr al-Dīn Muḥammad (d. 855). Al-Suyūṭī was the ninth-generation descendant of Humām al-Dīn al-Khuḍayrī al-Asyūṭī, widely recognized as a saint,[4] whom al-Suyūṭī later credited with passing on his own inclination toward Sufism.[5] It is recounted that, as a child, al-Suyūṭī was brought to visit a saint named Muḥammad al-Majdhūb, who subsequently prayed for his blessing.[6]

It must be noted here that at the outset, much of the descriptive material concerning al-Suyūṭī in this study is derived from his own writings, particularly his autobiographical and self-referential works. This is a methodological choice rather than an assumption of transparency: in the absence of sustained critical studies challenging the reliability of his self-representation, al-Suyūṭī's autobiographical corpus remains an important—though not unproblematic—source for reconstructing his intellectual persona. At the same time, we remain attentive to the rhetorical and potentially self-fashioning nature of such claims. Where his writings are read alongside accounts of his contemporaries or intellectual

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[2] Iyād Khālid Al-Ṭabbāʿ, *Al-Imām al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Suyūṭī Maʿlamat al-ʿUlūm al-Islāmiyyah* (Damaskus: Dār al-Qalam, 1996), pp. 23–5.

[3] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Taḥadduth bi Niʿmatillāh*, ed. by ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm al-Anīs (Istanbul: Dār al-Lubāb, 2021), p. 37.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 10.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 12.

[6] Given the close relationship between his father and al-Majdhūb, shortly before his death, he sent a family member to request a prayer from the saint. Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Taḥadduth bi Niʿmatillāh*, p. 47; ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Shādhilī, *Bahjat al-ʿĀbidīn bi Tarjamah Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAṣr Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī*, ed. by Abdulllāh Nabhān (Damaskus: Majmaʿ al-Lughah al-ʿArabiyyah, 1998), p. 64.

rivals, however, his statements are not taken at face value. Instead, they are systematically juxtaposed with external perspectives in order to reconstruct a more dialogical and contested intellectual field.

Al-Suyūṭī became an orphan at the age of five years and seven months, when his Qur'anic memorization had reached only Q. 66. Fulfilling his father's wishes, he was raised under the care of his father's close companion, the renowned Ḥanafī scholar Ibn al-Ḥumām Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Sīwasī (d. 861). Before reaching eight years of age, he had memorized the entire Qur'an and had committed to memory *ʿUmdah al-Aḥkām* of al-Maqdisī (d. 600), al-Nawawī's *Minhāj* (d. 676), Ibn Mālik's *Alfiyyah* (d. 672), and al-Qāḍī al-Bayḍāwī's *Minhāj* (d. 691). In the month of Ṣafar 864/1460, he submitted his memorization of the first three works to ʿAlam al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī (d. 898), Sharaf al-Dīn al-Munāwī (d. 1031), ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī (d. 884), and Amīn al-Dīn of Luxor, who granted him *ijāzah* despite his being only fifteen years old. He subsequently advanced his studies in *farā'iḍ* (Islamic inheritance law), mathematics, and algebra.[7] Naturally, he pursued all other traditional Islamic sciences diligently, with the exception of *ʿIlm al-Qirā'āt*, under the guidance of leading scholars. "I neither hear nor see anything without retaining it," he stated.[8] Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Kāfiyajī (d. 879), a teacher whom al-Suyūṭī evidently prized above all others, granted him an *ijāzah* and described him as "an outstanding, pure, and highly intelligent young man… surpassing his peers… needing no further description… we witness in him signs of virtue and perfection…". Remarkably, this *ijāzah* was issued on 6 Jumādī al-Akhīrah 868/1464, when al-Suyūṭī was only nineteen.[9]

With a distinguished scholarly career and considerable popularity, al-Suyūṭī was entrusted with various responsibilities. By 871/1467, he had already been authorized to issue *fatwās*, although his rulings never deviated from the positions of al-Nawawī (d. 676) in the Shāfiʿī school. A year later, in 872/1468, he was commissioned to recite and dictate ḥadīth (*imlā'*) at Jāmiʿ Ibn Ṭūlūn, an academic tradition initiated by Rabīʿ b. Sulaymān (d. 270/883), a disciple of al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820). This practice continued across generations until it ceased following the death

[7] Al-Suyūṭī , *Al-Taḥadduth bi Niʿmatillāh*, pp. 47–8.

[8] Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Taḥadduth bi Niʿmatillāh*, p. 186.

[9] Muḥammad Ālu Riḥāb, "Ijāzah al-Imām Muḥyiddīn al-Kāfiyajī li Tilmīdhihī al-ʿAllāmah Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī", *Alūkah* (August 26, 2015), https://www.alukah.net/culture/0/90911/إجازة-الإمام-محيي-الدين-الكافيجي-لتلميذه-العلامة-جلال-الدين-السيوطي/.

of Ibn Ḥajar in 852/1448. Five years later, at the age of twenty-eight, al-Suyūṭī was selected to teach ḥadīth at the Khānaqāh Shaykhūniyah,[10] later becoming the Shaykh of the Sufi organization in Turbah Barqūq. In 891/1486, he was appointed by the reigning Mamlūk caliph to lead the Khānaqāh Bībarsiyyah, the largest Sufi institution in Cairo at the time, though his relationship with its members was not always harmonious.[11]

When ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-ʿAbbāsī (d. 903/1497) was deposed and succeeded by Sultan Touman Bey (d. 906/1501), a staunch adversary of al-Suyūṭī, he withdrew from public life for a period and only reemerged when power passed to Sultan Ghawrī (d. 922/1516). The sultan offered him leadership of the Bībarsiyyah or of one of the sultan's own madrasas, but al-Suyūṭī declined both. He spent his final years at Rauḍah al-Miqyās, while rulers and prominent figures visited, bringing gifts, all of which he refused, relying solely on God for his sustenance. According to ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Shādhilī (d. 935/1528), al-Suyūṭī saw the Prophet Muḥammad more than seventy times while awake, and one reason he avoided meeting with rulers was the fear that such encounters might prevent further visions of the Prophet.[12] Thus, following the path of his ancestors, al-Suyūṭī led a Sufi way of life.

Al-Suyūṭī clearly ranks among the intellectual geniuses of Islam. Many influential scholars studied under him, including Shams al-Dīn al-Dāwūdī (d. 945/1538), author of *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn*, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Shādhīlī (935/1529), author of *Bahjat al-ʿĀbidīn*, Aḥmad b. Iyās al-Ḥanafī (d. ca. 930/1524), a renowned historian and author of *Badāʾiʿ al-Zuhūr*; and ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī (d. 973/1565), the famous jurist and Sufi, among many others. As a polymath, his works encompassed nearly every branch of Islamic knowledge that had developed in his time, with a staggering volume of output. It is perhaps no coincidence that his first work was in the field of Qur'ānic exegesis: *Riyāḍ al-Ṭālibīn fī Sharḥ al-Istiʿādhah waʾl-Basmalah*, a concise treatise devoted to elaborating

[10] Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Taḥadduth bi Niʿmatillāh*, pp. 116–20.

[11] Due to their poor conduct, al-Suyūṭī discontinued their wages and stipends. In 903/1497 a kind of protest broke out, and they nearly killed him. Ultimately, the authorities removed al-Suyūṭī from his position, although in practice he remained shaykh until 906/1501. See: Takao Ito, "Al-Suyūṭī and Problems of the Waqf", in *Al-Suyūṭī, a Polymath of the Mamlūk Period: Proceedings of the Themed Day of the First Conference of the School of Mamlūk Studies*, ed. by Antonella Ghersetti (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), pp. 56–8.

[12] Al-Shādhilī, *Bahjat al-ʿĀbidīn*, p. 153.

on *ta'āwudh* and the *basmalah*, completed in 866/1462.[13] At that time, he was only sixteen years, six months, and ten days old. It is therefore unsurprising that al-Suyūṭī appears keenly aware of the hierarchy of knowledge he had mastered: "I am fully conscious of how I speak, how I express, how I reason (*istidlāl*), and how I weigh (*tarjīḥ*)."[14] Thus, reading an encyclopaedic thinker like al-Suyūṭī requires attention to how he himself perceived his works, situating them within an integrated network—according to their hierarchical organization—rather than as isolated writings.

Al-Suyūṭī claimed to have mastered, with unparalleled depth and breadth, seven fields of knowledge: *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, *naḥw* (grammar), *ma'ānī*, *bayān*, and *badī'* (rhetoric and literary sciences). None of the scholars listed among his teachers possessed mastery of all seven disciplines (aside from *fiqh*) at a level comparable to him. Following these seven fields, his proficiency in three additional disciplines—*uṣūl al-fiqh*, *jadāl* (dialectical theology), and *taṣrīf* (morphology)—was somewhat lower. The next tier included *farā'iḍ* (Islamic inheritance law), *inshā'* (composition), and *tarassul* (spiritual correspondence). The fourth tier comprised *qirā'āt* (Qur'ānic readings), which he had not studied under any teacher. Fifth in the hierarchy was medicine, while the final, and self-acknowledged most difficult, discipline was mathematics. "It feels like carrying a mountain",[15] al-Suyūṭī remarked regarding this field. Yet this statement should be understood in the context of the intellect of a genius and a great thinker. Feeling that a single assertion was insufficient, al-Suyūṭī repeatedly emphasized his relatively lower mastery of disciplines beyond the seven, noting, for example: "Nevertheless, my command of *farā'iḍ* surpasses that of all people in the present age."[16] In other words, he sought to stress that his relative limitations in a single branch of knowledge did not diminish the exceptional quality he derived from

[13] Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, "Riyāḍ al-Ṭālibīn fī Sharḥ al-Isti'ādhah wa'l-Basmalah", in *'Ashr Rasā'il fī'l-Tafsīr wa 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān li'l-Imām Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī*, vol. I, ed. by 'Abd al-Ḥakim al-Anīs (Dubai: Islamic Affairs & Charitable Activities Department, 2010).

[14] Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, "Masālik al-Ḥunafā fī Wāliday al-Muṣṭafā", in *Al-Ḥāwī li'l-Fatāwī*, vol. II, ed. by 'Abd al-Laṭīf Ḥasan 'Abd al-Raḥmān (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2000), pp. 217–8.

[15] 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-Muḥāḍarah fī Tārīkh Miṣr wa'l-Qāhirah*, vol. I, ed. by Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Kairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, 1968), p. 339.

[16] Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Taḥadduth bi Ni'matillāh*, p. 222.

his mastery of the seven fields, which he regarded as boundless as an ocean. "Anyone who thinks I state this as a weakness has truly failed to comprehend my words," he explained.[17] As a consequence of this awareness of his mastery, al-Suyūṭī declared himself a *mujtahid muṭlaq* (absolute jurist). He claimed to occupy the position of *mujtahid* in three disciplines simultaneously: *fiqh*, *ḥadīth*, and the Arabic language—a stature previously attained only by Taqīyuddīn al-Subkī (d. 756/ 1355).[18] This assertion was not initially made openly, but it appears sporadically across his works.[19] Although he presented it as an aspiration, there is a strong impression that al-Suyūṭī regarded himself as the Renewal (*Mujaddid*) promised by God to appear once every century.[20]

al-Suyūṭī had a deep affection for the *fuqarā'*, the Sufi community who often appeared socially poor or humble. This love was clearly nurtured through family education; from a young age his father took him to visit Shaykh Muḥammad al-Majdhūb, a revered saint, and he also proudly mentioned that some of his ancestors were among the spiritually enlightened. In line with the Sufi tradition during the time of al-Suyūṭī, when a common form of initiation was *tabarruk*—the receiving of the *khirqah* and spiritual blessing through a chain tracing back to the Prophet Muhammad—he himself received the *khirqah* in 869/1465 from Ibn Imām al-Kāmiliyyah (b. 808/ 1406) and was authorized to pass it on within lineages connected to the Qādiriyyah, Aḥmadiyyah (the Badawiyyah Sufi order), and Suhrawardiyyah orders.[21] His profound affection for the Sufi community, grounded in a comprehensive understanding of Sufism as the practical realization of the principle of *Iḥsān* in religion, profoundly shaped al-Suyūṭī's way of life, particularly in his later years. Traces of this influence are evident in his Qur'ānic exegesis, but he was also engaged in contemporary polemics. As is well known, in the second half of the ninth Islamic century, intellectual efforts emerged that sought to question—and even undermine—the credibility of prominent Sufi figures whose influence was widespread. Among these were Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240), an immensely renowned figure, and Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1234), the unsurpassed poet of Divine love, celebrated as *sulṭān al-'āshiqīn*; both

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 223.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 224.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 218.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 243.

[21] Eric Geoffroy, "Al-Suyūṭī as a Sufi", in *Al-Suyūṭī, a Polymath of the Mamlūk Period: Proceedings of the Themed Day of the First Conference of the School of Mamlūk Studies*, ed. by Antonella Ghersetti (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), p. 9.

became targets of criticism and even charges of *takfīr*. The principal agent behind these attacks was none other than al-Biqāʿī (d. 885/1480), who would later become al-Suyūṭī's rival.

Al-Biqāʿī, author of the Qur'ānic commentary *Naẓm al-Durar*, composed two short treatises: *Tanbīh al-Ghabī ilā Takfīr Ibn ʿArabī* and *Taḥdhīr al-ʿIbād min Ahl al-ʿInād bi Biḍʿah al-Ittiḥād*. In 1980, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Wakīl published these works under the title *Maṣraʿ al-Taṣawwuf* (Duel Against Sufism).[22] In them, al-Biqāʿī attacked the credibility of Ibn ʿArabī and Ibn al-Fāriḍ, as well as other figures, going so far as to declare them *kuffār*. He accused these central Sufi figures of being deceivers who, under the guise of piety, misled the Muslim community while allegedly intending to undermine Islam itself. The story of al-Biqāʿī became extensive, and writers of *ṭabaqāt* literature typically refer to these events as *kārithah al-Biqāʿī* (the tragedy and disaster of al-Biqāʿī). Beyond attacking the Sufis, al-Biqāʿī's proposal to incorporate biblical sources in Qurʿānic exegesis also provoked controversy—an approach he employed in his commentary *Naẓm al-Durar fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa'l-Suwar*. To justify this method, he ultimately composed *Al-Aqwāl al-Qawīmah fī Ḥukm al-Naql mina'l-Kutub al-Qadīmah*.[23] Regarding this latter work, al-Biqāʿī entered into a polemic with al-Sakhāwī, who authored *al-Aṣl al-Aṣīl fī Taḥrīm al-Naql mina'l-Tawrāh wa'l-Injīl* in opposition to his views.[24]

In addition to al-Biqāʿī, another author who declared Ibn ʿArabī a *kāfir* was Muḥammad al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497) who painstakingly compiled *fatwās* on jurisprudence dating back to the sixth Islamic century that cast Ibn ʿArabī in a negative light. His work, *Al-Qaul al-Munbī ʿan Tarjamah Ibn ʿArabī*, remains a primary reference for opponents of Sufism to this day. It is worth noting that these arguments contributed little that was original, as most authors of this period merely reproduced the texts of Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328), Taqī al-Fāsī (d. 1115/1703), and others. In Chapter II of this work, al-Sakhāwī even recommended the burning of Ibn ʿArabī's Sufi writings, particularly *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah* and *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam,* as well as other works of the same genre. Al-Suyūṭī issued a robust response to this phenomenon. He composed *Tanbīʾah al-Ghabī bi*

[22] Ibrāhīm b. ʿUmar al-Biqāʿī, "Tanbīhal-Ghabī ilā Takfīr Ibn ʿArabī", in *Maṣraʿ al-Taṣawwuf*, ed. by ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Wakīl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1980).

[23] Walid A. Saleh, *In Defense of the Bible: A Critical Editions and an Introduction to al-Biqa'i's Bible Treatise* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

[24] Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍauʾ al-Lāmiʿ li Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsiʿ*, vol. I (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1992), p. 106.

Tabrī'ah Ibn ʿArabī to refute al-Biqāʿī, as well as *Qamʿ al-Muʿāriḍ fī Nuṣrah Ibn al-Fāriḍ*.[25] His collection of *fatwās*, *Al-Ḥāwī li'l-Fatāwā*, also includes defenses of Sufi figures, both in chapters specifically on Sufism and in sections on *ḥadīth*. His inclination and close affinity with the Shādhilīyya order led him to write *Ta'yīd al-Ḥaqīqah al-ʿAliyah wa Tashyīd al-Ṭarīqah al-Shādhilīyyah*.[26] Beyond these, al-Suyūṭī produced numerous works in the field of Sufism and also authored *Minhāj al-Sunnah wa Miftāḥ al-Jannah*, a jurisprudential work dedicated to "the devout, the Sufis, and seekers on the path to the Hereafter, who immerse themselves in the love of God." He was sufficiently creative that the organizational structure of this work diverges from the conventions of typical jurisprudential manuals.[27] Through these writings, al-Suyūṭī was well-known as the first scholar in Mamlūk era to assume such a clear and public defense of Sufism.[28]

Al-Suyūṭī's inclination toward Sufism also emerges in his Qur'anic exegesis. For instance, in his commentary on Q. 2:143, which mentions the change of the *qiblah* as a means for God to observe those steadfast in faith—and which caused some Muslims to apostatize—the event was understood by the Companions themselves as a severe test. Although the primary aim of *Qaṭf al-Azẖār* is to explore the literary dimensions of the Qur'an, in this context al-Suyūṭī cites the words of the Sufi master Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), who advocated the engagement of *'ain al-ḥaqīqah/ the eye that perceives reality* rather than *'ain al-tafrīqah/ the eye trapped by multiplicity* in observing the material world. Consequently, changes in the *qiblah* direction are understood as manifestations of the One, without disturbing the spiritual consciousness that remains

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[25] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, *Sharḥ Maqāmāt Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī*, vol. II, ed. by Sāmir Maḥmūd al-Durūbī, (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1989).

[26] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, *Ta'yīd al-Ḥaqīqah al-ʿAliyyah wa Tashyīd al-Ṭarīqah al-Shādhiliyyah*, ed. by ʿĀṣim Ibrāhīm al-Kayālī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2006); Aaron Spevack, "Al-Suyūṭī, the Intolerant Ecumenist: Law and Theology in Ta'yīd al-Ḥaqīqa al-ʿAliyya Wa-Tashyīd al-Ṭarīqa al-Shādhiliyya," in *Al-Suyūṭī, a Polymath of the Mamlūk Period: Proceedings of the Themed Day of the First Conference of the School of Mamlūk Studies*, ed. by Antonella Ghersetti (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2016), pp. 12-46.

[27] Muḥammad Ālu Riḥāb, "Fiqh al-ʿAllāmah al-Suyūṭī min Khilāl Tarājum Abwāb Kitābihī Minhāj al-Sunnah wa Miftāḥ al-Jannah", *Alūkah* (31 October 2018), https://www.alukah.net/sharia/0/130361/فقه-العلامة-السيوطي-من-خلال-تراجم-أبواب-كتابه-منهاج-السنة-ومفتاح-الجنة/.

[28] Geoffroy, "Al-Suyūṭī as a Sufi", p. 8.

perpetually connected to and present with God.[29] Moreover, some of the most celebrated elaborations on his *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* also come from the Sufi tradition. *Al-Futūḥāt al-Ilāhiyyah bi Tawḍīḥ Tafsīr al-Jalālayn li'l-Daqā'iq al-Khafiyyah* was composed by the illiterate Sufi master Shaykh Sulaymān b. 'Umar al-Jamal (d. 1204/1789),[30] while *Ḥāshiyah al-Ṣāwī* was authored by his disciple, Shaykh Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ṣāwī (d. 1241/1825), a follower of the Khalwatīyyah order.[31] In addition to studying with al-Jamal, al-Ṣāwī also studied under Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-'Adawī (d. 1201/1787), famously known as "al-Dardīr," whose minor work *al-Kharīdah al-Bahiyyah* had a significant influence on Islamic theology in the pre-modern Malay archipelago.

B. Behind the Luminosity of al-Suyūṭī: Disputes with Scholars and Mentors

As he lamented in several of his works, most notably in the concluding section of *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, al-Suyūṭī appears deeply pessimistic when reflecting on the objective conditions of his time. He describes his era as a time "in which God has filled the hearts of people with envy, and abuse has become rooted in their bodies like blood."[32] In his portrayal, the period was marked by dominance of ignorance, excessive love of office and status, marginalization of the religious sciences, and elevation of philosophy above them. Al-Suyūṭī's assessment was shaped in part by his frequent confrontations with contemporary scholars. As an individual endowed with exceptional intelligence and extraordinary capacity for memorization, he also enjoyed access to manuscripts that were beyond the reach of many other researchers. This advantage made him appear far more productive than most of his contemporaries in terms of scholarly output. Under such circumstances, it is hardly surprising that al-Suyūṭī attracted rivals. Indeed, rivalries with fellow scholars often

[29] 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, *Qatf Al-Azhār fī Kashf al-Asrār*, vol. I, ed. by Aḥmad bin Muḥammad al-Ḥammādī (Qatar: Wizārah al-Auqāf wa'l-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyyah, 1994), p. 338.

[30] Sulaymān bin 'Umar al-'Ujailī al-Jamal, *Al-Futūḥāt al-Ilāhiyyah bi Tauḍīḥ Tafsīr al-Jalālayn li'l-Daqā'iq al-Khafiyyah*, ed. by Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2018).

[31] Aḥmad bin Muḥammad al-Khalwatī al-Ṣāwī, *Ḥāshiyah al-Ṣāwī 'alā Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, ed. by Muḥammad 'Abd al-Salām Shāhīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2000).

[32] 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fi 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, ed. by Fawwāz Aḥmad al-Zamarlī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 2007), p. 952.

unfolded with considerable intensity, particularly given that al-Suyūṭī's own responses were equally pointed.

Among the well-known accounts of al-Suyūṭī's confrontations with fellow scholars is his dispute with al-Sakhāwī. Both were prominent *ḥadīth* scholars and belonged to the scholarly circle of Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (d. 852/ 1449).[33] At the outset, relations between the two appear to have been cordial. In al-Sakhāwī's autobiography, *Irshād al-Ghāwī*—a work discovered only later and composed before their hostility fully erupted—one can observe evidence of a cordial exchange between them, marked by mutual correspondence and expressions of praise. At one point, al-Suyūṭī is said to have hurried barefoot to greet al-Sakhāwī, who had conveyed his salutations to him upon al-Suyūṭī's return from the pilgrimage to Mecca. On that occasion, al-Sakhāwī gently criticized al-Suyūṭī for referring to him in writing as *ṣāḥibunā* ("our colleague"), even though al-Suyūṭī's position at the time was that of a student. Al-Suyūṭī immediately revised the expression, replacing it with *shaykhunā* ("our teacher") when referring to al-Sakhāwī. Nevertheless, although the language used here is not yet as harsh as al-Sakhāwī's later remarks in *al-Ḍaw' al-Lāmi'*, the autobiography already contains an unflattering description of al-Suyūṭī as "foolish and simple-minded" (*aḥmaq māʾiq*), along with the accusation that he had "stolen and plagiarized" al-Sakhāwī's works. The seeds of hostility had thus begun to emerge, even if the conflict had not yet reached its later intensity.[34]

al-Sakhāwī was indeed known for his sharp and often severe critical judgments (*jarḥ*) against scholars of his own time. However, as noted by 'Abd al-Raʾūf al-Munāwī (d. 1031/1621) and others, the pages of *al-Ḍaw' al-Lāmi'* in which al-Sakhāwī records the biography of al-Suyūṭī are not merely critical in tone but also appear openly disparaging. For instance, al-Sakhāwī remarks that al-Suyūṭī "did not seriously study all that I have mentioned above." He further acknowledges that al-Suyūṭī had received authorization and recommendation to teach from more than one scholar—particularly with the support of al-Bulqīnī—yet he nonetheless attributes al-Suyūṭī's appointment to a teaching position (*taṣdīr*) at the Jāmi' Shaykhūnī partly to the influence of his father.

[33] It should be noted that al-Suyūṭī was born too late to have the opportunity to study directly under Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī.

[34] Muḥammad Ālu Riḥāb, "Kalām al-Imām al-Sakhāwī 'an al-'Allāmah al-Suyūṭī fī Sīratihī al-Dhātiyyah Irshād al-Ghāwī," *Alūkah* (11 October 2015), https://www.alukah.net/culture/0/94379/كلام-الإمام-السخاوي-عن-العلامة-السيوطي-في-سيرته-الذاتية-إرشاد-الغاوي/.

Beyond this, al-Sakhāwī accuses him of "*affecting the manner of a shaykh/tamashyakh bi al-shaykhiyyah*" (i.e., pretending to scholarly authority) and of appropriating al-Sakhāwī's own writings, making only slight modifications before presenting them as his own compositions. Among the works he claims were thus appropriated are *al-Khiṣāl al-Mūjibah li'l-Ẓilāl*, *al-Asmā' al-Nabawiyyah*, *al-Ṣalāh 'alā'l-Nabī*, and *Mawt al-Abnā'*, along with several others. Al-Sakhāwī further alleges that al-Suyūṭī plagiarized a work of Ibn Taymiyyah that criticizes Aristotelian formal logic—indeed claiming that al-Suyūṭī had even sought his assistance in this matter. He also accuses al-Suyūṭī of claiming a scholarly rank before attaining it, and suggests that both his speech and his writings were marked by a tendency to disparage his own teachers.[35]

Al-Sakhāwī interprets al-Suyūṭī's own admission that he neither mastered nor particularly valued mathematics as evidence of ignorance—indeed, as a mere pretext intended to conceal weaknesses in his claim to the rank of *ijtihād*. Not content with recounting episodes in which al-Suyūṭī allegedly suffered defeat in scholarly disputations, al-Sakhāwī further characterizes several of his student's works as plagiarized from Ibn Ḥajar. Among the titles he mentions are *Lubāb al-Nuqūl fī Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, *'Ayn al-Iṣābah fī Ma'rifat al-Ṣaḥābah*, *al-Nukat al-Badī'āt 'alā'l-Mawḍū'āt*, and *Tadhkirat al-Mu'asī bi Man Ḥaddatha fa Nasiya*. According to al-Sakhāwī, these works would have been far more beneficial had they remained faithful to the original wording of Ibn Ḥajar rather than being altered at will. Al-Sakhāwī also challenges several of al-Suyūṭī's claims concerning his scholarly formation, including his alleged study with al-Qumuṣī and the account of a dream attributed to al-Maḥallī (d. 911/1505). In his view, the numerous inconsistencies, distortions, and textual corruptions (*taṣḥīf*) in al-Suyūṭī's writings stemmed from a fundamental misunderstanding caused by his failure to study directly with leading scholars (*fuḍalā'*) and his stubborn preference for relying on solitary reading of books. At the height of his critique, al-Sakhāwī remarks that al-Suyūṭī was "extremely quick in writing—yet somewhat mad and arrogant, even toward his own mother, who is said to have complained about him."[36] His barbed remarks extend even further: while composing the biography of al-Suyūṭī's father, al-Sakhāwī insinuates that al-Suyūṭī himself did not even know the year of his father's birth and was unfamiliar with the majority of his father's

[35] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍau' al-Lāmi'*, vol. IV, p. 66-7.

[36] *Ibid.*, vol. IV, p. 69.

teachers.[37]

In response to these personal attacks, al-Suyūṭī reacted with equal severity. In *Naẓm al-ʿIqyān*, he portrays al-Sakhāwī as intellectually "naked," possessing no real expertise beyond the discipline of *ḥadīth*. According to al-Suyūṭī, al-Sakhāwī's historical writings consist largely of invective directed at other scholars and are therefore unworthy of being treated as reliable references.[38] In *al-Kāwī*, al-Suyūṭī goes even further. He asserts that, if weighed in the marketplace of knowledge, al-Sakhāwī's intellectual worth would not exceed that of a *qiṭmīr*—the thin, worthless membrane of a date pit. In his polemical characterization, al-Sakhāwī embodied nothing but stupidity and ignorance (*tajassada ḥamqan wa jahlan*), to the extent that he would not even be capable of answering a simple question about ritual ablution practices such as *istinjāʾ*.[39] Al-Suyūṭī also counters by alleging that many of al-Sakhāwī's works in the field of *ḥadīth* were little more than drafts derived from the literary remains of Ibn Ḥajar, which al-Sakhāwī merely modified before presenting them as his own contributions.[40] As a skilled poet, al-Suyūṭī was particularly adept at crafting sharp and elaborate expressions of criticism, weaving together lines that both challenged and ridiculed al-Sakhāwī with considerable rhetorical force.

إن السخاوي جاهل متمخرق * لا يرعوي عند الصواب إذا أثر

فإذا أشرت إلى كذوب أحمق * فإلى السخاوي فهو كذاب أشر

Al-Sakhāwī is truly foolish and simple-minded,

heedless of the truth when goodness is conveyed.

If one seeks the liar and the dullard,

it is al-Sakhāwī himself: the liar and the wretched one![41]

[37] *Ibid.*, vol. XI, p. 73. For al-Suyūṭī, *mulāẓamah* (the practice of staying with and meeting teachers directly) was not of great importance. He stated: 'I did not pursue extensive *simaʿ* (oral transmission of reports) because I was occupied with more significant matters—namely, teaching, writing, and studying *dirāyah* (critical analysis) under reputable imams.' This is perhaps what led al-Sakhāwī to accuse him of failing to engage deeply with the scholars. Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Taḥadduth bi Niʿmatillāh*, p. 67.

[38] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, *Naẓm al-ʿIqyān fī Aʿyān al-Aʿyān*, ed. by Philip K. Hitti (New York: Syrian-American Press, 1927), p. 152.

[39] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, "Al-Kāwī fī Tārīkh al-Sakhāwī," in *Sharḥ Maqāmāt Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī*, vol. II, ed. by Sāmir Maḥmūd al-Durūbī (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risālah, 1989), p. 936.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 949.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 950.

قل للسخاوي إن تعروك نائبة * علمي كبحر من الأمواج ملتطم
والحافظ الديمي غيث السحاب نخد * غرفا من البحر أو رشفا من الديم

Tell al-Sakhāwī: when difficult matters confront you,

my knowledge is like a surging ocean.

Drink from al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Diyamī, that rain-bearing cloud,

whether a bucket drawn from the sea or a drop of falling rain.[42]

As a prolific and somewhat temperamental writer, al-Suyūṭī composed a number of works in direct response to the criticisms of al-Sakhāwī. Among these are *al-Qawl al-Mujmal fī Radd al-Muhmal*, *Alwiyat al-Naṣr fī Khaṣīṣāt bi'l-Qaṣr*, and *al-Kāwī fī Tārīkh al-Sakhāwī*, among others. Unfortunately, the conflict between the two did not remain confined to the two individuals. The confrontation expanded into a broader polarization within the scholarly community, dividing intellectual circles into two opposing camps: those aligned with al-Suyūṭī and those supporting al-Sakhāwī. Exchanges of criticism and invective continued between these two groups, which were composed largely of their respective students and associates. On al-Suyūṭī's side stood figures such as Fakhr al-Dīn 'Uthmān al-Diyamī (d. 908/1502), Amīn al-Dīn al-Luxūrī, and Sirāj al-Dīn al-'Abbādī (d. 914/1508), among others. On the opposing side were scholars such as Ibn al-Karakī (d. 922/1516), Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn al-Makkī (d. 889/1484) and his teacher al-Jūjarī, as well as Shams al-Dīn al-Bānī—another adversary of al-Suyūṭī, whom he claimed had been embroiled in hostility with his family since his father's generation, a case of what he described as "an inherited enmity" (*'adāwah fī'l-ābā' ṣilah fī'l-abnā'*).[43] More than forty pages of al-Suyūṭī's autobiography, *al-Taḥadduth bi Ni'matilāh* (chapter 17), are devoted to recounting his conflicts with contemporary scholars, functioning almost as a space for both personal grievance and self-defense. Curiously, this section opens with reports narrating how the prophets of earlier times were opposed by their own communities, followed by accounts of great scholars whose prominence inevitably attracted the envy and resentment of other learned figures.

[42] Muḥammad bin Muḥammad al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib al-Sā'irah bi A'yān al-Mi'ah al-'Āshirah*, vol. I, ed. Khalīl al-Manṣūr (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1997), p. 54.

[43] Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Taḥadduth bi Ni'matillāh*, p. 188.

C. Al-Suyūṭī as *Mufassir par Excellence*: Assessing His Claims Against the Evidence

As a scholar of extraordinary breadth and depth, al-Suyūṭī demonstrated remarkable productivity across a wide spectrum of Islamic sciences. Disciplines such as *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, *nahw*, *maʿānī*, *bayān*, and *badīʿ*—which he himself acknowledged as the areas of his greatest expertise—served as primary outlets for his intellectual endeavours. His contributions extended to numerous other fields as well. Moreover, his output was rarely limited to a single work per discipline; in many cases, he produced dozens of works. In his autobiography, published in *Ḥusn al-Muḥāḍarah*, al-Suyūṭī reported having authored 300 titles (excluding works that were later withdrawn or revised).[44] In *al-Taḥadduth bi-Niʿmatillāh*, this number is recorded as 431[45] or 433[46] titles. Eight years prior to his death, in 903/1497, Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥimṣī copied directly from al-Suyūṭī's own list (*Al-Fahras*), recording 460 titles.[47] Another student of al-Suyūṭī, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Shāzilī, recorded 561 titles, which he stated were copied directly from the *Al-Fahras* manuscript, verified by his teacher's handwriting, and read aloud in al-Suyūṭī's presence.[48] In his investigation, Yaḥyā Sāʿātī notes that the largest percentage of al-Suyūṭī's works were devoted to the discipline of ḥadīth (40%). The distribution by category is as follows: (1) *tafsīr* and Qur'ānic studies, 37 titles; (2) ḥadīth and related subjects, 163 titles; (3) *mushṭalah al-ḥadīth*, 20 titles; (4) *fiqh*, 68 titles; (5) *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *uṣūl al-dīn*, and *taṣawwuf*, 18 titles; (6) language, *nahw*, and *taṣrīf*, 44 titles; (7) *maʿānī*, *bayān*, and *badīʿ*, 6 titles; (8) interdisciplinary works, 10 titles; (9) *adab*, *nawādir*, *inshāʾ*, and poetry, 69 titles; (10) history, 25 titles. The total thus amounts to 460 titles.[49]

[44] Al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn Al-Muḥāḍarah*, vol. I, p. 338.

[45] Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Taḥadduth bi Niʿmatillāh*, pp. 133–60.

[46] The total of 433 titles refers to the calculation in the Elizabeth Sartain edition. Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Taḥadduth bi Niʿmatillāh*, ed. by Elizabeth Mary Sartain (Kairo: Maṭbaʿah al-ʿArabiyyah al-Ḥadīthah, 1975), pp. 105–36.

[47] This corresponds to the calculation by Sāʿātī in *Yaḥyā Maḥmūd Sāʿātī*. Meanwhile, according to the numbering of Muḥammad Ālu Riḥāb, the total is 465 titles. See: Yaḥyā Maḥmūd Sāʿātī, "Fahras Mu'allafāt al-Suyūṭī al-Mansūkh fī ʿĀm 903 H: Dirāsah Wa Taḥqīq", *Majallah ʿĀlam Al-Kutub*, vol. 13, no. 2 (1990), pp. 232–48; Muḥammad Ālu Riḥāb, "Fahras Mu'allafāt al-ʿAllāmah Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (Nuskhah Ibn al-Ḥimṣī) wa bihī Ziyādāt Tunsharu li Awwal Marrah", *Alūkah* (17 March 2016), https://www.alukah.net/culture/0/100406/فهرس-مؤلفات-العلامة-جلال-الدين-السيوطي-نسخة-ابن-الحمصي-وبه-زيادات-تنشر-لأول-مرة/.

[48] Al-Shādhilī, *Bahjat al-ʿĀbidīn*, pp. 175–255.

[49] Sāʿātī, "Fahras Mu'allafāt al-Suyūṭī al-Mansūkh", p. 235.

The exact number of al-Suyūṭī's works requires further investigation. The probability of duplicate titles should also be minimized as much as possible, as Yaḥyā Sā'ātī has suggested in another study.[50] What is certain is that in 911 H, about a week before his death, al-Suyūṭī was still producing works. However, due to illness, he did not write this work himself but dictated it to his student. *Al-Tanqīḥ fī Mas'alah al-Taṣḥīḥ*, according to the testimony of Al-Dāwūdī (d. 945), was the last work of our scholar.[51] To mention several works relevant in the context of *tafsīr* and related sciences, the following titles are significant: (1) *Riyāḍ al-Ṭālibīn fī Sharḥ al-Isti'ādhah wa'l-Basmalah* (authored in 866 H), (2) *al-Yadd al-Busṭā fi'l-Ṣalāh al-Wusṭā* (879 H), (3) *al-Durr al-Manthūr fi'l-Tafsīr bi'l-Ma'thūr* (898 H, 13 years before he passed away), (4) *Nawāhid al-Abkār wa Shawārid al-Afkār/ Ḥāshiyah Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī*, (5) *al-Azhār al-Fā'iḥah fī Sharḥ al-Fātiḥah*, (6) *al-Iklīl fī Istinbāṭ al-Tanzīl*, (7) *al-Taḥbīr fī 'Ilm al-Tafsīr*, (8) *al-Muhadhdhab fī mā Waqa'a fi'l-Qur'ān mina'l-Mu'arrab*, (8) *Ayāt al-Kursī Ma'ānīhā wa Faḍā'iluhā*, (9) *Fatḥ al-Jalīl li'l-'Abd al-Dhalīl*, (10) *Marāṣīd al-Maṭālī' fī Tanāsub al-Maqāṭi' wa al-Maṭāli'*, (11) *Mufḥamāt al-Aqrān fi Mubhamāt al-Qur'ān*, (12) *'Ashr Rasā'il fī al-Tafsīr wa 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, 2 volumes, (13) *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, (14) *Mu'tarak al-Aqrān fī I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, (15) *Asrār Tartīb al-Qur'ān*, (16) *Qaṭf al-Azhār fī Kashf al-Asrār*. The second copy of this compilation was completed by Muḥammad al-Sanhūrī in 917.[52]

Regarding how al-Suyūṭī understood and perceived himself as a *mufassir*, two important premises need to be highlighted. First, al-Suyūṭī's claim of unmatched mastery in seven fields of Islamic knowledge, with *tafsīr* consciously listed as the foremost discipline. As he acknowledged with gratitude, such a level of mastery was not even attained by his teachers (except for *fiqh*, which occupied the third position). This assertion should be understood in the context of a student whose achievements far surpassed those of his instructors. Second, al-Suyūṭī's

[50] Yaḥyā Maḥmūd Sā'ātī, "Mushkilat al-'Unwān fī Mu'allafāt al-Suyūṭī wa Atharuhā fī Iḍṭirāb Iḥṣā' 'Adadihā bayna'l-Dārisīn," in *Al-Imām Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī Faqīhan wa Lughawiyyan wa Muḥaddithan wa Mujtahidan* (Beirut: ICESCO, Dār al-Taqrīb bayna'l-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyyah, 2001).

[51] Muḥammad bin 'Alī Al-Dāwūdī, *Tarjamah al-'Allāmah al-Suyūṭī*, ed. by 'Abd al-Ḥakīm al-Anīs (Istanbul: Dār al-Lubāb, 2021), p. 120.

[52] There remain many works of al-Suyūṭī that have not yet been taken into account. Among the most recent collected editions of his writings is the publication of Dār al-Lubāb, issued in 30 volumes. At present, it is not yet clear whether Muḥammad Ālu Riḥāb, who has shown considerable interest in al-Suyūṭī's works, has completed assembling his collection or not.

declaration of having attained the status of a full *mujtahid*, not merely that of a conventional scholar (*'ālim muqallid*). In an intellectual climate that generally regarded the door to *ijtihād* as closed, this stance was undoubtedly bold. More than claiming to be a *mujtahid*, he was aware that there were sufficient grounds to consider himself a reformer (*mujaddid*).

These two premises bring us closer to understanding how al-Suyūṭī perceived himself as a *mufassir*. First, let us begin with the prerequisites that a Qur'ānic exegete must fulfill, as outlined in *al-Itqān*. In Chapter 78 of this work (*fī ma'rifat shurūṭ al-mufassir wa ādābihi*), after citing the views of Abu Ṭālib al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), Ibn Taymiyyah, al-Zarkashī (d. 794/1392), and others, al-Suyūṭī lists fifteen areas of knowledge that an exegete must master. In order, these are: Language, *Nahw* (syntax), *Taṣrīf* (morphology), *Ishtiqāq* (derivation), *Ma'ānī*, *Bayān*, *Badī', Qirā'āt* (Qur'ānic readings), *Uṣūl al-Dīn* (principles of religion), *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence), *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* and *al-Qiṣaṣ* (circumstances of revelation and stories), *Nāsikh–Mansūkh* (abrogating and abrogated verses), *Fiqh* (jurisprudence), Relevant ḥadīth for interpreting ambiguous (*mubham*) and concise (*mujmal*) verses, *'Ilm al-Mauhibah*, the knowledge arising from sincerity and piety.[53] Although al-Suyūṭī does not explicitly name the source, these fifteen prerequisites are in fact derived from and cited from his teacher, Al-Kāfiyajī, whom he described as endlessly creative and possessing inexhaustible knowledge. When compared with the text of *al-Taysīr fī Qawā'id 'Ilm al-Tafsīr*, we find a different and more systematic arrangement. Al-Kāfiyajī proposed three categories of scholarly prerequisites: *Lafẓiyyah* (verbal including language, *Ishtiqāq*, *Taṣrīf*, *Nahw*, *Ma'ānī*, *Bayān*, *Badī'*, *Qirā'āt*), *'Aqlīyyah* (rational including *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, *'Ilm al-Qiṣaṣ wal-Akhbār*, Sunnah relevant to *mujmal* and *mubham*, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, *Fiqh* and Ethics, *'Ilm al-Kalām*), and *Mawhibiyyah* (spiritual/ *'Ilm al-Mawhibah*).[54]

If we measure these prerequisites against al-Suyūṭī's six hierarchies of knowledge, we can quickly observe that the majority fall within fields that al-Suyūṭī had mastered, except for *'Ilm al-Qirā'āt* (mentioned in his fourth hierarchy) and *'Ilm al-Mawhibah*, which he does not include in any hierarchy, as it is non-cognitive in nature and represents the fruits and manifestation of piety. In short, al-Suyūṭī fulfilled all the prerequisites of a *mufassir* and possessed the authority to interpret the Qur'ān. Moreover, if

[53] Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fi 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, pp. 864–6.

[54] Muḥammad bin Sulaymān Al-Kāfiyajī, *Al-Taysīr fī Qawā'id 'Ilm al-Tafsīr*, ed. by Muṣṭafā Muḥammad Ḥusain al-Dhahabī (Kairo: Maktabah al-Qudsī, 1998), pp. 27–9.

we consider the two premises above, it is not entirely mistaken to conclude that al-Suyūṭī perceived himself not only as a legitimate *mufassir* but even as a *mujtahid* and reformer in this field. To substantiate this, we can rely on the categories of al-Suyūṭī's own works. In *Ḥusn al-Muḥāḍarah* and *al-Fahras*, the works are categorized according to fields of knowledge; however, a shift occurs in *al-Taḥadduth bi-Niʿmatillāh*, written later than *Ḥusn al-Muḥāḍarah*. In *al-Taḥadduth*, al-Suyūṭī created a new category based on the principles of novelty and inimitability. He uses the term *al-tafarrud*, with the specific meaning of a work for which he knows of no comparable counterpart on earth. This clearly relates to his claim as a reformer. Al-Suyūṭī does provide a disclaimer, noting that his claim for this category does not imply that earlier scholars were weak or incapable, but rather that they did not give these topics particular attention. As for his contemporaries, however, al-Suyūṭī does not feel the need for a disclaimer, as he is confident that none of them could produce a comparable work. The reason, he explains, is that achieving such a level requires extensive scrutiny (*saʿah al-naẓar*), repeated research (*kathrah al-iṭṭilāʿ*), and a life devoted to persistent labour and seriousness in study (*mulāẓamah al-taʿab wal-jidd*). Al-Suyūṭī lists eighteen titles in this category: *al-Itqān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*, *al-Durr al-Manthūr fīʾl-Tafsīr biʾl-Maʾthūr*, *Tarjumān al-Qurʾān*, *Asrār al-Tanẓīl*, *al-Iklīl fī Istinbāṭ al-Tanẓīl*, *Tanāsuq al-Durar fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt waʾl-Suwar*, *al-Nukat al-Badīʿāt ʿalā al-Mawḍūʿāt*, *Jamʿ al-Jawāmiʿ* and its commentary, *Hamʿ al-Hawāmiʿ*, *al-Ashbāh wa al-Naẓāʾir* or *al-Maṣāʿid al-ʿAliyyah fī al-Qawāʿid al-ʿArabiyyah*, *al-Silsilah fīʾl-Naḥw*, important notes or *al-Nukat* to *al-Alfiyyah*, *al-Kāfiyah*, *al-Shāfiyah*, *al-Shudhūr*, dan *al-Nuẓhah*, *al-Fatḥ al-Qarīb ʿalā Mughnī al-Labīb*, *Sharḥ Shawāhid al-Mughnī*, *al-Iqtirāḥ fī Uṣūl al-Naḥw wa Jadalihī*, *Ṭabaqāt al-Nuḥāt al-Kubrā* or *Bughyah al-Wuʿāt*, *Ṣaun al-Manṭiq wa al-Kalām ʿan Fann al-Manṭiq wa al-Kalām*, and *al-Jāmiʿ fī al-Farāʾiḍ* (not yet written).[55]

Although the high similarity between *al-Itqān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* and *al-Burhān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* by al-Zarkashī is apparent to anyone, it is nevertheless striking that al-Suyūṭī placed *al-Itqān* as the first work in his series of unparalleled writings. In the preface, he even acknowledges the contribution and influence of *al-Burhān* on *al-Itqān*, immediately after he frames his own conjecture as *mutafarrid* (unique).[56] This appears somewhat contradictory. Indeed, if we consider the comprehensive nature of *al-Itqān*, the breadth of its chapters, the use of extremely rich references

[55] Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Taḥadduth bi Niʿmatillāh*, pp. 133–4.

[56] Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fi ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*, p. 27.

inaccessible to most people, and its dominant influence in subsequent periods, these variables can explain why al-Suyūṭī ranked this work so highly. Ultimately, this is the book that he described as "exceedingly beautiful, unsurpassable, whose structural elegance surpasses strings of jewels, and which gathers benefits and beauties never before compiled in a single volume in previous times."[57]

Regarding his smaller work, *Al-Iklīl fī Istinbāṭ al-Tanẕīl*, al-Suyūṭī advised: "Hold this work firmly with both hands, bite it with your molars; its small size should not make you underestimate it; whoever views it with a sincere heart will surely recognize the abundance of knowledge contained within."[58] In his records, after writing *al-Itqān*, al-Suyūṭī followed it with *Al-Iklīl*, then *Lubāb al-Nuqūl*, then *Mufḥamāt al-Aqrān fī Mubhamāt al-Qur'ān*, then *Al-Muhaẕẕab fī Mā Waqa'a fī al-Qur'ān mina'l-Mu'arrab*, followed by *Mu'tarak al-Aqrān*, then *Majāz al-Fursān*, and finally *Khamā'il al-Zuhar fī Faḍā'il al-Suwar*—all of which he described as surpassing other works in their respective fields.[59] Even without examining other volumes in al-Suyūṭī's oeuvre, these examples help us understand how al-Suyūṭī—as a *mufassir par excellence*, *mujtahid*, and reformer—perceived and evaluated his own works.

D. Report-Based Authority in al-Suyūṭī's Qur'ānic Exegesis

As a *mufassir* with grand aspirations as a reformer, did al-Suyūṭī have a methodology guiding his exegetical work? Given the breadth and depth of his knowledge, it seems epistemologically implausible that he did not. Studies on al-Suyūṭī's methodology in Qur'ānic interpretation have been carried out extensively, particularly within the scope of specific works. For instance, one chapter of Muḥammad Yūsuf al-Shurbajī's comprehensive study analyzes ten of al-Suyūṭī's tafsīr and Qur'ān-related works, without neglecting his methodology.[60] Similarly, introductory works by Muḥammad Ḥusain al-Dhahabī, Muḥammad 'Alī Āyāzī, and others touch upon his exegetical approach. However, because these works differ in focus, purpose, and scholarly tools, summarizing al-Suyūṭī's tafsīr methodology proves challenging. For our purposes, perhaps the most

[57] *Ibid*., p. 952.

[58] 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Iklīl fī Istinbāṭ al-Tanẕīl*, ed. by Saif al-Dīn 'Abd al-Qādir al-Kātib (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1981),p. 20.

[59] Al-Suyūṭī, *Qaṭf al-Aẕhār fī Kashf al-Asrār*, vol. 1, p. 95.

[60] Muḥammad Yūsuf Al-Shurbajī, *Al-Imām al-Suyūṭī wa Juhūduhu fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Damaskus: Dār al-Maktabī, 2001).

straightforward approach is to consider how al-Suyūṭī himself perceived his works. Accordingly, *al-Itqān* should be placed first for this objective. Consider the following statement:

وسميته بالإتقان في علوم القرآن وسترى في كل نوع منه إن شاء الله تعالى ما يصلح أن يكون بالتصنيف مفردا وستروى من مناهله العذبة ريا لا ظمأ بعده أبدا **وقد جعلته مقدمة للتفسير الكبير** الذي شرعت فيه وسميته بمجمع البحرين ومطلع البدرين الجامع لتحرير الرواية وتقرير الدراية ومن الله اسمتد التوفيق والهداية والمعونة والرعاية إنه قريب مجيب وما توفيقي إلا بالله عليه توكلت وإليه أنيب.

"I have titled this book Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān, and you will see that each section within it—God willing—is worthy of being treated as a separate work. You will drink fresh water from its source, and thereafter you will no longer thirst. I have made it a prelude to the Grand Tafsīr I am preparing, which I have titled Majma' al-Baḥrayn wa Maṭla' al-Badrayn al-Jāmi' li Taḥrīr al-Riwāyah wa Taqrīr al-Dirāyah. To God alone I hope for guidance, support, help, and protection. Truly, He is Most Near and Responsive. I have no success except through God; in Him I place my trust, and to Him I shall return."[61]

We argue that al-Suyūṭī's methodology in tafsīr is, in fact, *al-Itqān* itself. Whether it has been completely applied in his tafsīr *Majma' al-Baḥrayn wa Maṭla' al-Badrayn* is the question that the second part of this article will deal with. Chapters 77 (*fī ma'rifah tafsīrihi wa ta'wīlihi wa bayān sharfihi wa'l-ḥājah ilayhi*) and 78 (*fī ma'rifah shurūṭ al-mufassir wa ādābih*) of *al-Itqān* warrant special attention. Although they do not explicitly state al-Suyūṭī's position on the differentiation between the terms *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl* or their respective scopes, one can clearly perceive his tendency to place the authority of transmitted reports (*riwāyah*) above all else. Through the influence of Ibn Taimiyyah's short treatise, *Muqaddimah fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, we see al-Suyūṭī's profound respect for the tafsīr reports of the early generations. His recommended methodology prioritizes first the elucidation of Qur'ānic verses by cross-referencing them with one another, followed by the Sunnah of the Prophet, and then the opinions of the Companions, and even the Tabi'īn—an approach that has now become widely accepted. Al-Suyūṭī certainly acknowledged the authority of ḥadīth for Qur'ānic exegesis, yet he lamented the scarcity of reports that could withstand rigorous ḥadīth criticism. In short, the number of reports deemed *marfū'* (attributed directly to the Prophet, peace be upon him) was very limited.[62] The concluding section of *al-Itqān* contains these

[61] Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fi 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, p. 29.

[62] *Ibid*., p. 854.

ḥadīth, which al-Suyūṭī later traced more extensively in his four-volume tafsīr *Tarjumān al-Qur'ān*, compiling over one hundred thousand reports, both *marfūʿ* and *mauqūf* (attributed to the Companions).[63] Unfortunately, this work is reported lost by scholars. Later, al-Suyūṭī condensed it into *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, which remains accessible today. However, as ʿAbdullāh al-Ghumārī noted,[64] al-Suyūṭī, in preparing this compilation, largely set aside his role as a ḥadīth critic, collecting reports without validation except in minor instances. If Burge's thesis is correct, *al-Durr al-Manthūr* can be regarded as the culmination of Ibn Taimiyyah's approach to *tafsīr*.[65]

Unlike Ibn Taimiyyah, who tended to overlook or refrain from questioning the interpretations of the Companions except when suspected of being based on *isrā'īliyyāt* material,[66] al-Suyūṭī was not satisfied with such assumptions. Simply presuming that the Companions received instruction directly from the Prophet does not automatically grant their tafsīr reports equivalent authority. Drawing on Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's critique of Imam al-Ḥākim, al-Suyūṭī narrows the scope of the Companions' exegetical authority to areas such as *asbāb al-nuzūl* and similar matters, which essentially do not involve reasoning—thus, they are considered direct transmission from the Prophet himself.[67] This means that while tafsīr reports from the Companions are important, their authority is clearly not equal to that of reports directly from the Prophet. This emphasis on the authority of reports also appears in the introduction to *Qaṭf al-Azhār fī Kashf al-Asrār*, also known as *Asrār al-Tanzīl*. In the preface, al-Suyūṭī expresses gratitude for being facilitated in compiling *Tarjumān al-Qur'ān*, which he notes this time comprises five volumes and gathers tafsīr and *ta'wīl* reports originating from the Prophet and the Companions, with *sanad muttaṣil* (unbroken chains of transmission). He deliberately omits the views of the Tabiʿīn and subsequent generations. He then remarks:

وهذا لعمري هو التفسير، فإن الكلام في معاني القرآن ممن لم ينزل عليه ولا سمع من المنزل عليه، إنما هو رأي محض، فإن كان موافقا للقواعد فهو التأويل، وإن خرج

[63] *Ibid.*, p. 870.

[64] ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad al-Ṣiddīq al-Ghumārī, *Bidaʿ al-Tafāsīr* (Beirut: Dār al-Rashād al-Ḥadīthah, 1986), p. 160.

[65] S. R. Burge, "Scattered Pearls: Exploring al-Suyūṭīs Hermeneutics and Use of Sources in al-Durr al-Manthūr fī'l-Tafsīr bi'l-Ma'thūr", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* vol. 24, no. 2 (2014), pp. 251–96.

[66] Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm ibn Taimiyyah, *Muqaddimah fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, ed. by ʿAdnān Zarzūr (Kuwait: Dār al-Qur'ān al-Karīm, 1972), pp. 95–102.

[67] Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fi ʿUlūm al-Qur'ān*, p. 860.

عنها، وأخطأ المراد، فتحريف وتبديل.

"Indeed, this is the essence of tafsīr. Discussion of the meanings of the Qur'ān that does not come from the original recipient (the Prophet) and not from someone who heard directly from him is, in reality, merely opinion. If it aligns with the established principles, it is considered ta'wīl; but if it deviates or strays from the intended meaning, it is distortion and alteration."[68]

In the following pages, al-Suyūṭī even emphasizes that one must limit oneself solely to tafsīr reports originating from the Prophet and the Companions, which he considers sufficient.[69] In a dream involving al-Maḥallī—famous and frequently cited in *Tafsir al-Jalālayn*, as seen in the best-edition editing by Fakhruddīn Qabāwah—[70] we also observe the same tendency, reinforcing the strong authority of transmitted reports. The dream narrates a meeting between Jalāluddīn al-Maḥallī and al-Suyūṭī, including a dialogue that leads to al-Suyūṭī's own acknowledgment that his work is superior to that of his teacher. Responding to a dream of Kamāluddīn al-Maḥallī (Jalāluddīn's brother), conveyed to al-Suyūṭī by al-Ṭaukhī, a Cairene scholar active in the late ninth/fifteenth century, al-Suyūṭī humbly admits that his teacher al-Maḥallī's interpretation is far superior to his own and endeavors as much as possible not to deviate from his teacher's methodology. However, on certain issues, differences of opinion do arise. For instance, regarding the definition of *rūḥ* (spirit). While initially following al-Maḥallī's interpretation in QS Ṣād [38]:72, al-Suyūṭī later revised his view, giving greater weight to the textual narrative in QS Al-Isrā' [17]:85. Consequently, the tafsīr of *rūḥ* shifted from "*rūḥ* is a subtle body by which a human becomes alive through its infusion into him" (جسم لطيف يحيا به الإنسان بنفوذه فيه)[71] to "that by which the body becomes alive" (الذي يحيا به البدن).[72] The omission of kalām terminology, namely *jism* (body), in this interpretive shift merits attention, as it reflects a deliberate move toward consistency based strictly on the textual evidence.

Al-Suyūṭī's acceptance of the authority of transmitted reports extends to the point of acknowledging narrations that—within certain

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[68] Al-Suyūṭī, *Qatf al-Azhār fī Kashf al-Asrār*, vol. I, p. 89.

[69] *Ibid*., vol. I, p. 91.

[70] 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī and Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Maḥalli, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, ed. by Fakhruddīn Qabāwah (Lebanon: Lubnān Nāshirūn, 2008), p. 1079.

[71] *Ibid*., p. 1631.

[72] *Ibid*., p. 1065.

limits—compromise the textual integrity of the Qur'an. For example, Chapters 19 and 47 of *Al-Itqān* contain several reports implying *taḥrīf* (alteration) of the Qur'anic text, such as QS Al-Aḥzāb [33], which originally comprised 200 verses[73] but now contains only 73, among others. It also appears that al-Suyūṭī believed that the so-called surahs *al-Ḥafd* and *al-Khalʿ*, reported to exist in the Ubayy manuscript, were genuinely part of the Qur'anic text. Consequently, seven pages at the end of *al-Durr al-Manthūr*—before the Prayer of Completion (*Duʿā' Khaṭm al-Qur'ān*)—are dedicated to citing narrations about these two surahs. Moreover, al-Suyūṭī authored a short treatise titled *Itḥāf al-Wafd bi Sūratay al-Khalʿ wa al-Ḥafd*, specifically to confirm the existence of these two annulled surahs.[74] To illustrate al-Suyūṭī's tendency and submission to the authority of transmitted reports, one can even extend the analysis to his more rationalist interpretations. For instance, when interpreting QS Al-Baqarah [2]:19, which mentions the term "death," al-Bayḍāwī in *Anwār al-Tanẓīl* writes:

والموت زوال الحياة، وقيل عرض يضادها لقوله : (خلق الموت والحيوة)، ورد بأن الخلق بمعنى التقدير، والأعدام مقدرة.

"Death is the cessation of life. It is said that death is an accident opposed to life, supported by His Word: 'He created death and life.' This view can be challenged by the understanding that 'creation' here refers to ordaining or determination. And matters related to non-existence can indeed be determined."[75]

The meaning of the above text and its implications are as follows: In philosophy, we recognize the discussion of opposition (*taqābul*), which has four variants: contradictory (*tanāquḍ*), correlative (*taḍāyuf*), contrary (*taḍādd*), and privative (*al-malakah wal-ʿadam*). As emphasized by Mullā Ṣadrā in Chapter Six, Stage Five, the contradictory opposition is essentially negation and affirmation.[76] If we examine al-Bayḍāwī's text above, it is clear that the opposition between life and death is categorized as contradictory. Thus, death is "the cessation of life." The word *zawāl*

[73] Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fī ʿUlūm al-Qur'ān*, p. 529.

[74] Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Durr al-Manthūr fi'l-Tafsīr bi'l-Ma'thūr*, vol. XV, ed. by ʿAbdullāh bin ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Kairo: Markaz Ḥajar li'l-Buḥūth wa'l-Dirāsāt al-ʿArabiyyah wa'l-Islāmiyyah, 2003), pp. 810–6.

[75] ʿAbdullāh bin ʿUmar al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-Tanẓīl wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl*, vol. I ed. by Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Marʿashlī (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-ʿArabī), p. 52.

[76] Muḥammad al-Shīrāzī Mullā Ṣadrā, *Al-Ḥikmah al-Mutaʿāliyah fi'l-Asfār al-Arbaʿah*, vol. II, ed. by Muḥammad Khāmeneī and Maqṣūd Muḥammadī (Teheran: Sadra Islamic Philosophy Research Institute (SIPRIn)), p. 109.

means disappearance, vanishing, and nonexistence. In other words, death is non-life. More precisely, death is nonexistence because in itself it is negative, not affirmative. Death is not existential in nature so that it can be juxtaposed with life. Essentially, death does not exist, for what exists is only life. The severing of life is what we call death. Because its opposition is contradictory, al-Bayḍāwī's text presents a minor alternative view with the words "*qīla*" (it is said), which is generally used to indicate the weakness of a view. This minor view considers death as an accident, *'araḍ*. An accident is a secondary reality that can only be understood in relation to a substance. If this weak view is accepted, then the opposition between life and death is contrary, not contradictory. Contrary opposition presupposes two entities that are opposed and each is independent. For example, the opposition between hot and cold. Hot is the opposite of cold, yet clearly does not negate it. Not hot does not mean cold, and vice versa. Both concepts stand independently, and between their polarities, an intermediate concept can exist. We may call something "neither hot nor cold," but we cannot call something "both alive and dead" or "neither alive nor dead" simultaneously. Contradictory opposition makes the meeting of negation and affirmation impossible, whereas contrary opposition does not. What is the rational basis for calling the opposition between life and death contrary? There is none, except for the literal sound of the Qur'anic verse. That verse itself is not exclusive or closed, so it cannot be understood in only one sense. From this, we understand why al-Bayḍāwī attributes the minor view with the *al-tamrīḍ* form, namely *qīla*, "it is said."

However, in his *ḥāshiyah* or extensive commentary on al-Bayḍāwī's text, we find that Al-Suyūṭī rejects this important view of the mufassir. In *Nawāhid al-Abkār wa Shawārid al-Afkār*, Al-Suyūṭī cites the opinion of a group of hadith scholars who hold that death is a *jism* (corporeal entity). The term *'araḍ*, as used by Ash'arite theologians, is not employed here; rather, it is *jism*. Al-Suyūṭī is fully aware of this position because it is impossible for an *'araḍ* to transform into a *jism*. Our Mujaddid (Reformer) presents no rational argument in support of this view, except through the presentation of a collection of reports. For example, the report of Ibn Mas'ūd: "When the inhabitants of Paradise are already in Paradise, and the inhabitants of Hell are already in Hell, death—in the form of a beautiful sheep—will be brought to a place midway between Paradise and Hell. Then an angel will proclaim: 'This is death that kills humans in the world.' No one will fail to behold it. The sheep is then slaughtered

between Paradise and Hell." Also, the view of Qatādah in interpreting Q. al-Mulk [67]: 2: "Life is the horse of Gabriel, and death is the beautiful sheep." Al-Suyūṭī then adopts this position and summarizes his view:

والتحقيق ما أشرنا إليه، وهو أن الموت في الحقيقة هو هذا الجسم الذي على صورة الكبش، كما أن الحياة جسم على صورة فرس لا تمر على شيء إلا حيي. وأما المعنى القائم بالبدن عند مفارقة الروح فإنما هو أثره، فإما أن تكون تسميته بالموت من باب المجاز، لا الحقيقة، أو من باب الإشتراك، وحينئذ فالأمر في النزاع قريب.

"The verified (and correct) conclusion is as we have mentioned. That death in its essence is a jism appearing in the form of a sheep, just as life is a jism in the form of a horse, which approaches nothing except that it causes it to become alive. As for death as a "meaning" present in the body when separated from the soul, that is merely its effect. Its designation as "death" may be figurative, not literal, or due to equivocation. Thus, the apparent opposition is, in reality, quite proximate."[77]

Al-Suyūṭī's statement that the opposition is not so serious refers to the difference of opinion between Ash'arite theology and the hadith scholars, between '*araḍ* and *jism*. What is certain is that al-Suyūṭī regretted the influence of Mu'tazilite theology on al-Bayḍāwī, which even led him to attribute the Ash'arite view with the term *qīla*. And for the determination of this exegetical view, once again, its basis is solely the authority of the *riwāyah* (report). In the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, al-Suyūṭī appears less concerned with the definition and essence of death. In this concise exegesis, his exposition gives priority to a literary approach. Here, death is interpreted as the state in which hypocrites abandon their former beliefs and turn to faith. This occurs because the Qur'an alludes to darkness or dark clouds, representing disbelief; lightning, representing threat; and flashes of light, representing arguments that are too clear, causing the hypocrites to block their ears out of fear of death—that is, as a tendency toward belief. This literary-leaning interpretation also appears in *Qaṭf al-Azhār*, even with more detailed exposition, and tends to conclude similarly: "they excessively plugged their ears beyond the usual manner, to flee from the downpour" (فرارا من شدة الصوب).[78] In the accessible manuscript of *Qaṭf al-Azhār*, the cited text reads "فرار من شدة الصوت," "to flee/avoid the loudness of the sound."[79] This reading appears more coherent with

[77] 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, *Nawāhid al-Abkār wa Shawārid al-Afkār*, vol. II, ed. by Māhir Adīb Ḥabbūsh (Turki: Dār al-Lubāb, 2022), p. 191.

[78] Al-Suyūṭī, , *Qaṭf Al-Azhār*, vol. 1, p. 202.

[79] 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, "Makhṭūṭah Qaṭf al-Azhār fī Kashf al-Asrār", *Alūkah* (17 March 2016), https://www.alukah.net/library/0/102104/مخطوطة-قطف-الأزهار-في-كشف-الأسرار/.

al-Suyūṭī's explanation of the hypocrites' behavior in blocking their ears out of fear of encountering the truth of Islam.

Does this shift toward a literary tendency mean that al-Suyūṭī distanced himself from the authority of the *riwāyah*? After comparing with the text of *al-Durr al-Manthūr*,[80] we find a set of tafsīr reports whose content rests on the principle of *mathal* (parables). In other words, even al-Suyūṭī's literary expositions were in fact preceded by legitimacy derived from the reports. Thus, rather than claiming that al-Suyūṭī's methodology had shifted, it is safer to say that in each of these works he indeed developed a different model of tafsīr, because none of the three constitutes his magnum opus, which he claimed would encompass both *dirāyah* and *riwāyah* simultaneously, as we will attempt to reconstruct in the second part of this article.

E. Conclusion

This study has sought to illuminate the intellectual profile of al-Suyūṭī by situating his scholarly production within the broader intellectual and social environment of late Mamluk Cairo. Renowned for his remarkable productivity and wide-ranging mastery of Islamic disciplines, al-Suyūṭī cultivated a scholarly persona marked by strong self-confidence and a keen awareness of his intellectual standing. His writings consistently reflect the conviction that he possessed exceptional qualifications across several fields of knowledge, including Qur'ānic studies, *ḥadīth*, and Arabic linguistics. Within this framework, his claim to the rank of *mujtahid muṭlaq*—and even his suggestion that he might be counted among the *mujaddidūn* of his age—should be understood as part of a broader strategy of scholarly self-representation rooted in his intellectual ambition and prolific authorship. At the same time, al-Suyūṭī's career unfolded within a highly competitive scholarly milieu in which disputes over authority and reputation were not uncommon. His well-known rivalry with al-Sakhāwī exemplifies the intensity with which questions of intellectual legitimacy could be contested in the late ninth/fifteenth century. Accusations of plagiarism, criticisms of methodological competence, and polemical exchanges between rival circles formed part of a wider struggle over scholarly prestige. These confrontations not only shaped al-Suyūṭī's public image but also left clear traces in his writings, where defensive argumentation and personal rebuttal occasionally appear

[80] Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, vol. I, pp. 161–76.

alongside more conventional scholarly discourse.

Another dimension of al-Suyūṭī's intellectual identity emerges through his engagement with the Sufi tradition. Although often remembered primarily as a traditionist and jurist, the evidence demonstrates that his connection with Sufism was both substantial and sustained. His sympathetic treatment of figures such as Ibn ʿArabī and Ibn al-Fāriḍ, even in the face of criticism from certain contemporaries, reflects a broader commitment to defending the place of Sufism within Sunni intellectual life. Participation in Sufi networks and the reception of initiatory lineages further indicate that spirituality constituted an integral component of his scholarly worldview rather than a peripheral aspect of his biography.

Within the field of Qur'ānic interpretation, the present study has highlighted the centrality of transmitted reports in al-Suyūṭī's exegetical outlook. His writings reveal a strong commitment to the authority of *riwāyah*, particularly the interpretive traditions attributed to the Prophet, the Companions, and the earliest generations of Muslims. Yet this emphasis on transmission does not fully capture the complexity of his exegetical method. By presenting *al-Itqān fī ʿUlūm al-Qur'ān* as a methodological prelude to his projected commentary *Majmaʿ al-Baḥrayn wa Maṭlaʿ al-Badrayn,* al-Suyūṭī envisioned a comprehensive exegetical enterprise that would combine transmitted reports with rational analysis, linguistic investigation, and broader scholarly reflection. Taken together, these observations suggest that al-Suyūṭī's corpus should be approached as a coherent intellectual project rather than as a collection of independent works. His various writings on Qur'ānic studies—ranging from encyclopaedic treatises such as *al-Itqān fī ʿUlūm al-Qur'ān* to report-based compilations like *al-Durr al-Manthūr*—appear to have been conceived as complementary elements within a larger exegetical vision. At the centre of this vision stood the ambitious commentary *Majmaʿ al-Baḥrayn wa Maṭlaʿ al-Badrayn*, which sought to unite the twin currents of *riwāyah* and *dirāyah*. Although the work itself has not survived, the methodological reflections preserved in al-Suyūṭī's other writings allow us to glimpse the contours of this project. Further exploration of these materials may therefore offer new insights into the scope and structure of the exegetical synthesis he intended to produce, a task that we will undertake in the second part of this article.

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