A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF IMAM AL-BAIJURI'S ASWAJA THEOLOGY: DOCTRINAL REASONING IN TWO PRIMARY WORKS

*Muhammad Hidayat[1], Ibnatul Mardiah[2], Nurcholik Achmad[3], Nasirin[4]
[1]Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi, Indonesia
[2,3]Universitas PTIQ Jakarta, Indonesia
[4]Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt
*Email: hidayatazhary11@gmail.com

Abstract

This article offers a textual analysis of Imam Ibrāhīm al-Baijūrī al-Shāfiʿī's Aswaja theology through close reading of two widely studied creedal works, *Ḥāshiyah Kifāyah al-ʿAwām* and *Tuḥfat al-Murīd ʿalā Jawharat al-Tawḥīd*. Positioned within the intellectual milieu of al-Azhar and post-classical Sunni kalām, the study first outlines al-Baijūrī's scholarly profile and the basic conceptual foundations of Aswaja theology to clarify the doctrinal context in which his arguments operate. Methodologically, the research employs a qualitative descriptive–analytical library design and applies a structured textual coding procedure, using argumentative passages, technical terms, and chains of doctrinal reasoning as units of analysis. The discussion highlights how al-Baijūrī maintains an evidentiary balance between revelation (naql) and reason (ʿaql), assigning rational inquiry a bounded explanatory function without granting it autonomous authority over scriptural certainty. Three doctrinal loci receive focused analysis: (1) *Ahl al-Fatrah*, where definitive Qur'anic principles (qaṭʿī) guide the interpretation of speculative reports (ẓannī), supporting a restrained posture toward takfīr grounded in divine justice; (2) debates on the Qur'an as *Kalāmullāh al-Qadīm*, where the distinction between *kalām nafsī* and *kalām lafẓī* is used to reject both Muʿtazilite creationism and anthropomorphic literalism; and (3) the pedagogical articulation of divine and prophetic attributes (including the scheme of the "fifty attributes"), which connects doctrinal clarity to ethical orientation. The article concludes that al-Baijūrī's Aswaja reasoning is characterized by conceptual precision and a consistent hierarchy of proofs, which helps explain why his thought is frequently associated with doctrinal moderation in later discourse.

Keywords: al-Baijūrī; Aswaja; Ashʿarī theology; textual analysis; evidence hierarchy; kalām

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A. Introduction

This study examines the theological thought of Imam Ibrāhīm al-Baijūrī al-Shāfiʿi within the doctrinal framework of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah (Aswaja), situating it within contemporary debates on theological polarization and epistemological authority in Islamic thought. As a major Ashʿarī-Shāfiʿī scholar, al-Baijūrī played a crucial role in

articulating core principles of Islamic creed, particularly regarding the epistemic relationship between revelation (naql) and reason (ʿaql). His intellectual project emerged in response to competing theological currents, ranging from the rationalist excesses associated with Muʿtazilite theology (Syafi'i, 2023) to the rigid textualism characteristic of the Wahhābī movement (Muqoffi et al., 2023), Rather than aligning with either pole, al-Baijūrī advanced a mediating theological framework that sought to preserve doctrinal orthodoxy while maintaining rational coherence.

Contemporary Islamic discourse has increasingly been marked by ideological fragmentation, radicalism, and socio-religious tension, often rooted in ahistorical or reductionist readings of religious texts. While many studies highlight the urgency of theological moderation, much of this discourse remains normative, prescriptive, or detached from systematic engagement with classical theological texts. This condition reveals an academic gap: despite the frequent invocation of "moderation" (wasatiyyah) in modern debates, there remains a lack of text-based analysis explaining how classical scholars such as al-Baijūrī constructed a balanced theological epistemology capable of addressing doctrinal disagreement without collapsing into relativism or dogmatism. This study argues that al-Baijūrī's theological method provides a historically grounded model for negotiating reason and revelation amid intellectual contestation.

Existing scholarship has contributed important contextual insights but has not yet sufficiently examined al-Baijūrī's theology as a coherent epistemological system. For example, the study by Drs. H. Anasom, M.Hum., Dr. Hj. Naili Anafah, M.Ag., and Mukhamad Rikza, M.Si. (2016), *Kitab Sabiil al-ʿAbīd ʿalā Jawharat al-Tawḥīd Kiai Saleh Darat*, emphasizes the contextual adaptation of theological teachings to local realities (Anasom et al., n.d.). While this research underscores the importance of socio-cultural engagement in theology, it does not directly address how al-Baijūrī formulates the balance between textual authority and rational inquiry at the level of theological argumentation. Nevertheless, its findings resonate with al-Baijūrī's concern for harmonizing scriptural texts, rational analysis, and lived religious contexts.

Similarly, Mukhamad Rijal Hidayatulloh's 2022 thesis, *The Values of Tawḥīd and Creed in the Book Qatr al-Ghais by Imam Nawawi al-Bantani*, highlights the enduring relevance of tawḥīdic values within classical Islamic scholarship (Mukhamad Rijal Hidayatulloh, 2024). Although this work enriches discussions on tawḥīd in the context of

Islamic education, it does not specifically interrogate the epistemological mechanisms through which theological moderation is constructed. Nonetheless, its emphasis on tawḥīd as both doctrinal and ethical foundation reinforces the intellectual milieu in which al-Baijūrī's thought operates.

Further comparative insight is offered by Muallim Pohan's 2024 research on the concept of monotheism in the works of Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Laqqānī. Pohan demonstrates that tawḥīd in classical theology is not merely speculative but carries practical and ethical implications for everyday life (Pohan, 2024.), This perspective parallels al-Baijūrī's insistence that creed must inform moral conduct and social cohesion. However, existing studies have yet to systematically analyze how al-Baijūrī synthesizes these dimensions within his own theological writings, particularly in response to doctrinal polarization.

Based on this gap, the present study poses the following analytical questions: How does Imam al-Baijūrī conceptualize the relationship between revelation and reason within Aswaja theology, and in what ways does this framework function as a mediating response to theological extremism and rigid literalism? By conducting a systematic textual analysis of two primary works by al-Baijūrī, this article seeks to demonstrate that his theological moderation is not merely a normative stance but a structured epistemological model grounded in classical Sunni theology. In doing so, the study contributes to contemporary Islamic discourse by offering a historically rooted yet analytically verifiable framework for addressing ideological polarization while remaining faithful to the Sunni theological tradition.

B. Methods

This study employs a qualitative descriptive–analytical library research design. The primary data consist of two classical creedal works authored by Imam Ibrāhīm al-Baijūrī al-Shāfiʿī, namely *Ḥāshiyah Kifāyah al-ʿAwām* and *Tuḥfat al-Murīd ʿalā Jawharat al-Tawḥīd*, based on widely circulated printed editions traditionally used within the scholarly milieu of al-Azhar. These texts were selected because they represent al-Baijūrī's mature exposition of Sunni (Aswaja) theology and are central to the transmission of Ashʿarī doctrine in the post-classical period. Secondary sources include classical Ashʿarī–Māturīdī works, studies on the history of Islamic theology, and relevant

contemporary academic literature used for contextual clarification and conceptual verification.

Data analysis was conducted through a structured textual reading that focuses on doctrinal reasoning rather than on narrative description. The units of analysis were defined as argumentative passages, key technical terms, and sequences of theological argumentation related to three main doctrinal loci discussed in the texts: (1) the concept of *Ahl al-Fatrah* and the hierarchy of evidences (qaṭʿī–ẓannī), (2) debates on the ontological status of the Qur'an as *Kalāmullāh al-Qadīm*, including the distinction between *kalām nafsī* and *kalām lafẓī*, and (3) the systematic articulation of divine and prophetic attributes, including the pedagogical scheme of the "fifty attributes."

To organize the analytical process, this study adapts Miles and Huberman's interactive model as a textual analytical framework rather than as a field-based qualitative method. Data reduction involved selecting textual segments that directly represent al-Baijūrī's theological positions, which were then coded according to thematic relevance. Data display was carried out by organizing these coded materials into analytical themes corresponding to the identified doctrinal loci, while conclusion drawing relied on consistent patterns of argumentation observed across the two primary works.

Interpretive validity was ensured through a combination of content analysis, historical contextualization, and hermeneutical interpretation. Content analysis was used to identify recurring doctrinal patterns and argumentative structures; historical contextualization situated al-Baijūrī's theology within the intellectual environment of al-Azhar and post-classical Sunni kalām; and hermeneutical interpretation was applied to clarify technical theological concepts by considering their disciplinary usage and historical horizon. Through this procedure, the study maintains methodological coherence and transparency while remaining faithful to the textual character of its primary sources

C. Results and Discussion

1. The Intellectual Biography of Imām Ibrāhīm al-Baijūrī al-Shāfiʿī

Imam Burhanuddin Ibrāhīm al-Baijūrī, born in 1198 AH (1783 CE) in Bajur, a district in al-Manufiyah, Egypt, was one of the eminent scholars of the eighteenth (S 2024, 48) or nineteenth century who played a crucial role in preserving and disseminating Islamic teachings, particularly those of the Shafi'i school of jurisprudence and the Ash'ari

creed. The appellation "al-Baijūrī" refers to his birthplace, which has often been misunderstood in its written form, despite clarification by historians such as Imam al-Suyuthi (Muafa, 2017).

From a young age, al-Baijūrī was known for his intelligence and piety. He studied the Qur'an under the guidance of his father before continuing his education at al-Azhar University in 1212 AH. However, the French occupation of Egypt temporarily disrupted academic activities, prompting him to move to Giza before later returning to al-Azhar. His scholarly journey was not without difficulty; he once experienced despair due to his struggle to comprehend certain lessons.

Al-Baijūrī mastered a wide range of disciplines, including jurisprudence (fiqh), theology ('aqīdah), mysticism (tasawwuf), linguistics, and logic. He studied under prominent scholars such as Shaykh Abdullah al-Sharqawi and Shaykh Hasan al-Quwaisini. His vast erudition eventually earned him positions as a teacher, author, and ultimately as the nineteenth Grand Shaykh of al-Azhar in 1263 AH (1847 CE). Under his leadership, al-Azhar became a stronghold of Islamic scholarship capable of confronting the intellectual challenges of its time (Al-Bajuri and Al-Karim, 2022, 84.).

In the field of theology, al-Baijūrī remained steadfast in adhering to the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah creed, particularly the Ash'ari school. Amid the rise of Salafi/Wahhabi movements that deemed Ash'arism heretical, he defended Ash'ari theology through his writings such as *Hāshiyah Kifāyah al-'Awām*, *Tuhfat al-Murīd*, and *Sharh al-Sanusiyyah* (Jum'ah, 2018). His rational and systematic approach rendered Ash'ari thought sharper and more relevant within his intellectual milieu. A defining feature of his thought was his ability to harmonize the domains of *sharī'ah* and *haqīqah*, law and spirituality. Rather than opposing jurisprudence and mysticism, he viewed them as complementary dimensions of the Islamic faith. This synthesis became a major contribution to bridging the gap between jurists and Sufi scholars.

The scholarly productivity of Imam al-Baijūrī was remarkable. He authored more than twenty significant works across various fields, including jurisprudence, theology, logic, and Qur'anic exegesis. Among his most notable works is *Hāshiyah Ibn Qāsim 'alā Matn Abī Shujā'* (Shafi'i jurisprudence), which continues to be studied at al-Azhar today. Even his unfinished works remain authoritative references in the study of classical Islamic sciences. He passed away on 27 Dhu al-Hijjah 1276 AH (19 July 1860 CE) and was buried

in the al-Mujawarin area of Cairo. His intellectual and moral legacy endures, positioning him as one of the most influential figures in the history of traditional Islamic thought.

2. The Concept of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah Theology in the Perspective of Imam Ibrāhīm al-Baijūrī

According to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), the term *ʿaqīdah* refers to a fundamental belief or core conviction (*Arti Kata Akidah - Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI) Online*, n.d.) Etymologically derived from the Arabic word *al-ʿaqd*, it denotes a firm bond or tie. (Sabila, 2019) Terminologically, it refers to a belief that admits no doubt, deeply rooted in the heart, whether true or false. When coupled with the term "Islam," however, *ʿaqīdah Islāmiyyah* signifies certain belief in the existence of Allah SWT, His absolute oneness, His perfect attributes, the negation of all imperfect qualities, and faith in all that was brought by Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him, including the unseen realm (Thahir, 2000).

He term *ʿaqīdah* is synonymous with "theology," derived from the Greek words *theos* (God) and *logos* (knowledge), meaning the science of divinity (Sinta Dewi 2021, 146). In Islam, theology denotes the discipline that examines the Divine Essence, His attributes, and His relation to creation (Bahrudin et al., 2023). It is also known by several other designations such as *ʿIlm al-Kalām* (Al-baijuri, 2020), *ʿIlm al-Uṣūl al-Dīn*, *ʿIlm al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, *ʿIlm al-Tawḥīd*, and *ʿIlm al-Ilāhiyyāt*. The name *ʿIlm al-Kalām* arises from the common phrase "discussion about" (*al-kalām ʿalā kadha*), as well as debates surrounding the "Speech of God" (the Qur'an) and whether it was created or not. It is called *ʿIlm al-Uṣūl al-Dīn* for addressing the foundational principles of Islam, and *al-Fiqh al-Akbar* for its superior nobility compared to jurisprudence (Dardir, 2016). The diversity of its appellations signifies its honor in Islam, as it concerns knowledge directly related to the Almighty. The maxim *yashrafu bi sharaf al-mutaʿallaq*, "the nobility of a discipline depends on the nobility of its subject", is particularly apt in this context (Jum'ah, 2018).

The theologians of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah, particularly those of the Ashʿari and Maturidi traditions, define theology as follows:

العلم الذي يبحث فيما يتعلق بالله تعالى من جهة إثبات العلم بوجوده تعالى وصفاته واسمائه وأفعاله
وفي النبوة وأحكامها وفي الغيبيات التي لا تعرف إلا بأدلة القرآن و السنة

"It is the science that discusses matters related to Allah the Exalted in terms of affirming knowledge of His existence, His attributes, His names, and His acts; as well as the study of prophethood, its conditions, and the unseen realities that can only be known through the evidences of the Qur'an and the Sunnah."(Awwad, 2020).

The study of Islamic creed within *'Ilm al-Kalām* is highly philosophical. Its epistemological sources consist of *dalīl naqlī* (textual revelation from the Qur'an and authentic Hadith) and *dalīl 'aqlī* (rational evidence) (Zahra et al., 2024). From these two foundations, Muslim theologians have developed comprehensive understandings of divinity, prophethood, and the metaphysical world, leading to the emergence of various theological schools such as the Khawarij, Murji'ah, Shi'ah, Mu'tazilah, Ash'ariyyah, Maturidiyyah, Karramiyyah, and Mujassimah, among others.

During the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the Muslim community remained united in matters of creed, as any doubts or theological questions were directly resolved by the Prophet himself. After his passing, however, the Muslim community faced new challenges regarding leadership. The appointment of Abu Bakr as the first caliph marked the beginning of communal awareness concerning the preservation of unity (Zulfikar, 2023).

A severe trial occurred during the caliphate of Uthman ibn 'Affan, when the rapid expansion of Islam brought in numerous new converts, including hypocrites such as Ibn Saba'. This infiltration led to the spread of discord and slander, culminating in Uthman's assassination and subsequent conflicts among the Companions, notably in the Battles of Jamal and Siffin (Atabik, 2015). These events gave rise to three major factions: the Ahl al-Sunnah, who continued to honor all Companions and viewed their differences as products of legitimate ijtihād; the Shi'ah, who supported Ali while condemning other Companions; and the Khawarij, who declared both Ali and Mu'awiyah to be unbelievers.

When Hasan ibn Ali relinquished political authority to Mu'awiyah for the sake of peace, a moment known as the *Year of Unity (ʿĀm al-Jamāʿah)*, Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah reaffirmed its principles of unity, moderation, tolerance, balance, and justice. They upheld communal solidarity (*al-jamāʿah*), respected diversity, rejected extremism, and refrained from easily labeling fellow Muslims as unbelievers. By integrating both rational and textual reasoning, Ahl al-Sunnah maintained intellectual integrity and moral

steadfastness amid division, ensuring its enduring relevance within the dynamics of contemporary religious and social life.

3. The Paradigm of al-Baijūrī's Theology

Imam Ibrāhīm al-Baijūrī presents a distinctive and robust conception of the creed of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah* (Sunni orthodoxy). He regards theology (*ʿaqīdah*) as a body of beliefs that must be known and deeply understood, not merely followed through blind imitation (*taqlīd*) (Al-baijuri, 2020). For al-Baijūrī, theology constitutes the very foundation of Islam; failure to grasp it properly may lead to misguidance or even disbelief. Conversely, a sound understanding of theology ensures one's recognition as a true Muslim in the eyes of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Al-Baijūrī argues that much of the moral and intellectual confusion in society stems from misconceptions about Sunni theology (*ʿaqīdah al-Asyʿariyyah wa al-Māturīdiyyah*), particularly in today's era of unfiltered and complex information.

Al-Baijūrī emerged as a leading scholar in refuting theological deviations beyond the boundaries of Sunni orthodoxy. During his time, various heterodox movements distorted the divine attributes by anthropomorphizing God and misconstruing the principles of Sunni belief (Muhammad Istiqamah, 2020). Through a clear, rational, and descriptive approach, al-Baijūrī explicated authentic Sunni doctrines using arguments derived from the Qur'an and Hadith, which he then rationalized through philosophical reasoning. His intellectual contributions are evident in his numerous works and the recognition he received from later scholars. The following section outlines several key theological paradigms of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah* according to Imam al-Baijūrī.

a. The Concept of *Ahl al-Fatrah*

The term *Ahl al-Fatrah* is composed of *ahl* (people or community) and *fatrah* (interval or suspension), referring to a period in which prophetic revelation was absent (Al Hamat, 2018). In Islamic theological discourse, *Ahl al-Fatrah* denotes individuals or communities who did not receive the message of Islam in an authentic and comprehensible form, either because they lived between prophetic missions or because the message of a prophet did not reach them (Alwana, 2022, 153.; Redaksi 2023). The Qur'an refers to this notion in *Surah al-Mā'idah* (5:19):"O People of the Scripture! Our Messenger has come to you, making clear to you [Our commands] after a period of

cessation (*fatrah*) of messengers, lest you say, 'There came not to us any bringer of good tidings or a warner.'"

Within this framework, Imām Ibrāhīm al-Baijūrī expands the definition of *Ahl al-Fatrah* to include not only those who lived between prophetic eras but also individuals who lived during the time of a prophet yet did not receive the message in a valid or intelligible manner. According to al-Baijūrī, such individuals are not subject to divine punishment and may attain salvation, even if they outwardly practiced polytheism, due to the absence of authoritative religious obligation (*ḥujjah sharʿiyyah*) upon them (Jum'ah 2018, 68). In this sense, their ultimate standing before God is determined not by formal adherence to Islamic law, but by the principle of divine justice and the non-imposition of responsibility without clear guidance.

Al-Baijūrī explicitly rejects theological positions that deny the salvation of *Ahl al-Fatrah* based on isolated (*āḥād*) reports, such as narrations claiming that figures like ʿAmr ibn Qays or Ḥātim al-Ṭāʾī are condemned to Hell. He argues that such reports cannot override definitive (*qaṭʿī*) Qur'anic evidence, particularly Surah al-Isrā' (17:15): *"And We never punish until We have sent a messenger [to warn]."* In Sunni epistemology, mutawātir texts carry conclusive authority, whereas *āḥād* narrations remain speculative (*ẓannī*); therefore, when an apparent contradiction arises, the latter must be interpreted (*ta'wīl*) in light of the former (Jum'ah 2018, 94).

This methodological hierarchy illustrates al-Baijūrī's commitment to epistemological balance between textual fidelity and rational coherence. The foundation of al-Baijūrī's argument ultimately lies in the principle of divine justice (*al-ʿadl al-ilāhī*). He maintains that it would be irrational and inconsistent with God's justice to punish individuals who were never presented with the divine message in a binding form. On this basis, al-Baijūrī includes the parents of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) among the *Ahl al-Fatrah*, arguing that they lived during a period devoid of prophetic guidance and are therefore free from punishment. This view is supported by Surah al-Shuʿarā' (26:219): *"And your movement among those who prostrate [in prayer],"* which he interprets as indicating the purity and faithfulness of the Prophet's lineage. This interpretation is further reinforced by the prophetic tradition: *"I was continually transferred from the loins of pure men to the wombs of pure women"* (narrated by Ibn

Mālik), which al-Baijūrī understands as evidence that God preserved the Prophet's ancestry among those deserving divine mercy.

Significantly, al-Baijūrī does not restrict the category of *Ahl al-Fatrah* to the pre-Islamic past. He allows for its applicability in the contemporary world, arguing that despite the global spread of Islam through modern communication, individuals who have not encountered an authentic, rational, and peaceful presentation of Islam—free from distortion or misrepresentation—may still fall under this category and thus remain eligible for divine mercy. This position aligns with the broader Sunni principle that moral and religious accountability arises only after the message of Islam has been conveyed clearly, truthfully, and in a manner accessible to sound reason.

Accordingly, a person is considered accountable only after Islam has been properly communicated and consciously rejected without coercion. Conversely, those who encounter Islam solely through distorted portrayals, biased media, or misinformation, yet sincerely seek the truth without ever meeting a genuine representative of the faith, may be classified as *Ahl al-Fatrah* (al-Azhar, 2016). This theological framework cautions against hastily declaring others disbelievers and underscores the ethical responsibility of Muslims to convey Islam through exemplary character, intellectual integrity, and compassion, in accordance with the Qur'anic principle that God does not punish a people until His message has truly reached them.

b. The Qur'an as the Eternal Word of God (*Kalāmullāh al-Qadīm*)

One of the most serious theological debates in Islamic thought concerns the ontological status of the Qur'an. The Muʿtazilah school, initiated by al-Jaʿd ibn Dirham, asserted that the Qur'an is a created entity (*makhlūq*) (Mubarok 2019, 125). Although this claim was intended to safeguard Islamic monotheism from theological inconsistency during the reign of Caliph al-Ma'mūn of the Abbasid dynasty, it sparked one of the most intense controversies in Islamic intellectual history. The Muʿtazilah argued that if the Qur'an were uncreated (*qadīm*), it would share eternity with God, which they considered impossible since only God is eternal. Therefore, they maintained that the Qur'an was God's created speech, manifested in audible sound, as exemplified in Moses' hearing of the divine word at Mount Ṭūr Sīnā. This dispute culminated in the *Miḥnah* (inquisition), during which scholars such as Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal were persecuted for affirming that the Qur'an is not a created being.

As a theologian of the Ashʿarī school, al-Baijūrī analyzed this issue with remarkable precision and intellectual rigor. He upheld that the Qur'an is *Kalāmullāh al-Qadīm*, the eternal speech of God, not a created or temporal phenomenon (*ḥādith*) (Jum'ah 2018, 160), However, he clarified that God's eternal speech is neither composed of letters nor sound, since both letters and sounds have beginnings and ends, attributes of created entities, and therefore cannot pertain to the divine essence (Siregar et al. 2024).

To elucidate the concept of divine speech devoid of sound or letters, al-Baijūrī employed the *theory of Kalām Nafsī* (internal or self-subsisting speech). He analogized God's speech to human internal discourse, when a person "speaks" within their heart without uttering any words or producing any sound. Likewise, the *Kalām* of God exists without phonetic form, yet it does not imply that God is mute. This analogy serves merely as an epistemic aid to help the human mind grasp that speech can exist without voice or letters, especially when ascribed to the transcendent and perfect Creator.

The concept of *Kalām Nafsī* finds basis in prophetic traditions, such as the Hadith: "When My servant remembers Me within himself, I remember him within Myself." (al-munawi, n.d.) The Qur'an also refers to this internal dimension of speech, as seen in *Surah al-Munāfiqūn* (63:1), where the hypocrites are condemned for uttering words that contradict what lies in their hearts, implying a distinction between spoken and inward speech.

According to al-Baijūrī, *Kalām Nafsī* should not be conflated with the recited Qur'an (*Kalām Lafẓī*) revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The revealed Qur'an is bound by time, form, and sequence, it has beginnings and endings, chapters and verses, whereas *Kalām Nafsī*, being eternal, transcends all temporal and linguistic constraints. The recited Qur'an corresponds in meaning to the eternal divine speech, yet it is expressed in created form to be comprehensible to humans. Only those whom God grants special unveiling may perceive the divine *Kalām* directly, not as sound, language, or letters, but as an immediate spiritual apprehension (Al-baijuri, 2020).

Al-Baijūrī further clarified that the written script, printed text, and vocal recitation of the Qur'an by human beings are all created phenomena. However, it is inappropriate to declare "the Qur'an is created" without qualification, lest one implies that its divine meaning and essence are created. Such expressions are only acceptable for pedagogical purposes (Jum'ah 2018, 124). Al-Baijūrī also criticized the *Hashawiyyah*, a literalist

branch within the Hanbali tradition, for asserting that God's speech consists of letters and sounds that are eternally sequential, including written and recited forms (Jum'ah, 2018). Though they denied that the Qur'an is created, their view shared structural similarities with the Muʿtazilah, who also associated divine speech with sound and letters, albeit while affirming its createdness (Ritonga et al. 2024, 14).

The difference between al-Baijūrī and the *Hashawiyyah*, *Muʿtazilah*, and *Salafī* schools is thus fundamental. Yet all concur that denying the Qur'an constitutes disbelief. Al-Baijūrī's firm stance remains relevant today in addressing modern misconceptions, such as those propagated by Panji Gumilang of the Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School, who claimed that the Qur'an is merely the work of Muhammad or comparable to an ordinary text (*Dwi Rizki, 2023*). Al-Baijūrī decisively refutes such views, affirming that the Qur'an is the divine Word of God, both in wording and meaning, and that its sacred nature cannot be equated with created writings, for it points to the eternal and serves as the foundation of Islamic law.

c. Al-Baijūrī's Concept of Theology: The Attributes of God and Prophethood

Al-Baijūrī's theological thought is deeply rooted in the Ashʿarī tradition, following the foundational principles of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī in *uṣūl al-ʿaqīdah*, yet he did not confine himself to mere imitation. He exercised *ijtihād* in secondary matters, resulting in a more nuanced and contextually relevant exposition of Sunni theology. Al-Baijūrī popularized what he termed "the fifty attributes of faith" (*ʿaqīdah khamsīn*), a systematic expansion of the classical doctrines of the thirteen and twenty divine attributes that had long characterized Sunni orthodoxy (Al-baijuri, 2020), While acknowledging that God's attributes are not limited to twenty, he emphasized their pedagogical importance as a boundary distinguishing Sunni belief from other theological orientations.

In explaining God's attributes, al-Baijūrī employed a textual, rational, and dialectical methodology. He advanced structured rational arguments to demonstrate the necessity of each attribute, differing from al-Ashʿarī, who gave greater primacy to scriptural texts. This divergence is methodological rather than doctrinal, reflecting the evolving dynamism of Ashʿarite theology in response to intellectual challenges of different eras. The three essential themes of *tawḥīd* (divine unity) discussed by al-Baijūrī are: the names of God, His attributes, and His acts, with the discourse on attributes forming the central axis of his theological system (Al-baijuri, 2020).

He classified God's attributes into three categories: obligatory (*wājib*), impossible (*mustaḥīl*), and permissible (*jā'iz*). The obligatory attributes number twenty, such as Existence (*wujūd*), Eternity (*qidam*), Everlastingness (*baqā'*), and others, supplemented by seven relational attributes (*ṣifāt ḥāliyah* or *kaunuhu*). The impossible attributes represent their opposites, such as nonexistence, temporality, or mortality, denying any creaturely imperfection from being ascribed to God (Husain & Amiruddin, 2021). The permissible attribute denotes God's absolute volition: He may act or refrain from acting according to His will, without compulsion or need.

Similarly, prophets and messengers possess three categories of attributes. Their obligatory traits include truthfulness (*ṣidq*), trustworthiness (*amānah*), conveyance (*tablīgh*), and intelligence (*faṭānah*). Their impossible traits are the opposites, falsehood, treachery, concealment, and ignorance (*balādah*). The single permissible attribute for prophets is the possession of ordinary human qualities, such as eating and sleeping, without diminishing their prophetic dignity (*Nawawi*, n.d.). Through his clear language and systematic exposition, al-Baijūrī strengthened the structure of Ashʿarī theology and rendered it intellectually relevant to the spiritual and rational needs of his contemporaries.

4. The Intellectual Biography of Imām Ibrāhīm al-Baijūrī al-Shāfiʿī

The Application and Contemporary Relevance of al-Baijūrī's Theological Values

The practical embodiment of theological principles profoundly shapes individual behavior and social ethics (Husain & Amiruddin, 2021). In Islam, the internalization of ʿaqīdah forms the foundation and moral compass of a Muslim's life, guiding decisions, overcoming challenges, and defining life's purpose. Firm belief in the doctrines of Islamic faith carries within it ethical and moral imperatives, integrity, honesty, compassion, and benevolence toward others, cultivating obedience to God and leading to salvation in this world and the hereafter.

a. The Theological Values of al-Baijūrī's Creed in the Fifty Attributes (Divinity and Prophethood).

The theological tenets (*aqidah*) popularized by al-Baijūrī, specifically through the discussion of the Fifty Attributes (*Sifat 50*), hold profound positive values, both theoretically and practically, in the lives of Muslims. Understanding the divine attributes of Allah SWT and of prophethood, namely the obligatory (*wajib*), impossible (*mustahil*), and permissible (*jaiz*) attributes (Al-baijuri, 2020), shapes a Muslim's system of thought,

attitude, and action. The implications of the theological values embedded in the *Sifat 50* include:

A Focused and Ordered Life: A solid understanding of the *aqidah* steers a Muslim's life, making it focused, orderly, and well-regulated in fulfilling the covenant of obedience to Allah and in maintaining relationships with fellow human beings. With *tawhid* (the oneness of God) firmly embedded in the heart, a Muslim will be consistent in their obedience to Allah SWT, as practiced by the *salafusaleh* (pious predecessors) who understood and embodied Allah's attributes in their daily social interactions. This establishes a stable moral foundation amidst the uncertainties of the modern world, which ultimately encourages the emergence of various activities beneficial to humanity (Nata, 2021).

Motivation for Gratitude and Magnification of Allah: The awareness that Allah created humanity out of His compassion and bestows blessings upon everyone, believers and non-believers alike, serves as evidence of the vastness of His mercy (*rahmah*). This encourages a Muslim to be sincerely grateful and to magnify Allah SWT, thereby becoming a true believer (*mukmin sejati*). This sense of gratitude fosters optimism and mental resilience in facing various situations.

Boundless Spiritual Closeness: By knowing that Allah is One and constantly watching, a Muslim accepts His decree (*rida*), carries out His commands with strong conviction, and avoids His prohibitions solely for His sake. This closeness invites Allah's love, creating spiritual and fiscal/social cohesion with the surrounding community, and mitigating feelings of isolation or emptiness amid the hustle and bustle of modern life (Pidrus et al. 2022, 138).

Enhancement of Piety (*Taqwa*) and Adherence to the Sunnah: Understanding the fundamental attributes of Allah and instilling the attributes of the Messenger within oneself shapes a quality personality with proven inner and outer piety. Worship is no longer a burden but an expression of love and a necessity. At this level, their faith is extremely resilient in the face of contemporary challenges, devoid of doubt, and this belief system will continually strengthen, yielding positive effects on their living environment and leading to salvation in this world and the hereafter (Kholid 2017, 74).

5. **Critique of Rationalists and Textualists: An Analysis of al-Baijūrī's Thought**

Al-Baijūrī's thought is not only constructive in elucidating the *aqidah* of *Ahlussunah wal Jama'ah* (Sunni orthodoxy) but is also critical of schools of thought deemed deviant. He sharply critiques both the rationalist and the textualist camps, advocating for a balanced position for both reason and revelation (Al-baijuri, 2020).

a. Al-Baijūrī's Critique of the Rationalists

Al-Baijūrī directs his critique not toward reason (*'aql*) as such, but toward what may be analytically categorized as *epistemological rationalism*, namely the tendency to elevate reason as an autonomous and decisive source of theological knowledge independent of revelation. This tendency is historically represented by theological groups such as the Muʿtazilah and certain strands of the *Falasifah*, who accorded reason primacy even in metaphysical and unseen matters (*al-ghayb*). Doctrines such as the claim that "Allah only knows universals"(Hidayat et al. 2024, 472-86), "Allah cannot be seen in Paradise"(Muhyidin and Nashihin 2021, 77-85), or "The Qur'an is a created entity" (Sofia Fahrany, 2024, 87.) exemplify the deviations strongly criticized by al-Baijūrī.

In al-Baijūrī's framework, reason is acknowledged as a necessary epistemic tool, but its function is inherently limited. Human intellect, he argues, is incapable of independently accessing ultimate truths concerning divinity, prophethood, and eschatology. For this reason, reason must operate within the guiding authority of revelation. Al-Baijūrī consistently emphasizes that theological certainty (*iʿtibār*) emerges from the integration of rational proofs (*dalīl ʿaqlī*) and scriptural proofs (*dalīl wahy*), rather than from rational speculation alone (Jum'ah, 2018).

This position is systematically articulated through his kalām-based argumentation, where logical reasoning functions to explicate and defend revealed truths, not to supersede them. From this perspective, al-Baijūrī's engagement with Muʿtazilite theology is neither dismissive nor purely polemical. Instead, it reflects a methodological disagreement regarding the scope of reason. While the Muʿtazilah maintain that ethical and legal values (*ḥasan* and *qabīḥ*) can be fully determined by reason alone—an idea grounded in the doctrine of *al-taḥsīn wa al-taqbīḥ al-ʿaqlī*—Ahl al-Sunnah theology, as articulated by al-Baijūrī, affirms that moral valuation ultimately derives from the Sharia. Reason, therefore, plays an interpretive and confirmatory role, but it remains epistemically subordinate to revelation in determining normative religious truths (Jum'ah, 2018).

b. Al-Baijūrī's Critique of the Textualists

Alongside his critique of rationalist excess, al-Baijūrī also problematizes what may be described as *literalist textualism*, an interpretive approach that confines religious understanding to the surface meaning of scriptural texts while neglecting rational analysis and hermeneutical principles. This approach is exemplified in the readings advanced by groups such as the Mujassimah and certain Wahhabi trends, particularly in their treatment of *mutashābihāt* verses. Literal interpretations of expressions such as "the Hand of Allah" (Bakri et al. 2024, 16), or "Allah is in the heavens or has a location" (Wahab and Omar 2014, 54). are identified by al-Baijūrī as leading toward anthropomorphism.

Al-Baijūrī grounds his critique in the foundational principle of *tawḥīd*, which categorically affirms divine transcendence (*tanzīh*). Since Allah is not a material entity, He cannot be described in terms of physical dimensions such as length, width, or depth (*ṭūl, ʿarḍ, ʿumq*) (Jum'ah 2018, 68). For al-Baijūrī, literalist readings that disregard this ontological distinction fail to uphold the epistemic hierarchy required in theological interpretation and risk compromising the coherence of divine attributes.

Beyond doctrinal concerns, al-Baijūrī also highlights the intellectual implications of strict textualism. An approach that excludes rational inquiry, he argues, weakens the capacity of the Muslim community to engage with complex theological questions, particularly in contexts that demand reasoned argumentation. In response, al-Baijūrī emphasizes the necessity of employing logical analysis and foundational principles (*uṣūl*) in interpreting revelation. Such an approach ensures that scriptural meanings remain consistent with sound reason and established theological principles (Jum'ah, 2018). Within this hermeneutical framework, reason and revelation are not opposing forces but complementary sources of knowledge, both originating from Allah SWT and functioning together as the epistemic basis of Sunni theology.

D. Conclusion

This study has shown that Imam Ibrāhīm al-Baijūrī's Aswaja theology, as reflected in *Ḥāshiyah Kifāyah al-ʿAwām* and *Tuḥfat al-Murīd*, is best approached as a disciplined pattern of doctrinal reasoning grounded in a hierarchy of proofs. Within the broader Sunni kalām tradition and the scholarly setting of al-Azhar, al-Baijūrī treats revelation (naql) as the locus of doctrinal certainty while employing reason (ʿaql) as a

bounded explanatory instrument that clarifies meanings and resolves apparent tensions without displacing scriptural authority. The analysis of *Ahl al-Fatrah* illustrates this method most clearly: definitive Qur'anic principles (qaṭʿī) are prioritized over speculative reports (ẓannī), yielding a non-hasty approach to takfīr anchored in the logic of divine justice and accountability. In debates concerning the ontological status of the Qur'an, al-Baijūrī's distinction between eternal divine speech (*kalām nafsī*) and its created expressions in recitation and writing (*kalām lafẓī*) enables him to reject both the Muʿtazilite doctrine of createdness and literalist conceptions that entail temporality or anthropomorphism. Finally, his systematic presentation of divine and prophetic attributes, including the pedagogical scheme of the "fifty attributes," demonstrates how doctrinal ordering is linked to moral formation and communal stability. Taken together, these findings indicate that what later discourse often labels "moderation" in al-Baijūrī is not a rhetorical posture but a methodological orientation defined by conceptual precision, evidentiary classification, and refusal of theological extremes.

<div align="center">***</div>

<div align="center">**References**</div>

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