

AL-BAZDAWĪ ON THE EARLY QIBLAH ORIENTATION BASED ON THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF AL-ḤADĪTH AND ASTROMETRY

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Abstract: After the expansion reached Transoxania- a classical name of Central Asia, al-Bazdawī realized a significant distortion of Qiblah azimuth, hence a need to revise the orientation procedure, based on contextual understanding of al-Ḥadīth. Consequently, al-Bazdawī wrote a treatise to inform that the later Ḥanafīs took the Qiblah in Transoxania as due west, and that the Shāfi‘īs took it as due south. This study has employed thematic analysis on al-Ḥadīth used in all the arguments, which were understood mainly by early scholars, textually, without considering it contextually, based on the astronomical aspects. This includes the study of *asbāb wurūd al-ḥadīth*, authenticity, reviewing al-Bazdawī’s treatise and mathematical analysis. The outcome of the study suggests that the application of topical ḥadīth on qiblah must critically be applied based on scientific and astronomical calculation. In conclusion, ḥadīth is one of the scientific miracles of the prophet Muhammad that must be applied within its context. Simple application based on textual understanding can lead towards the significant error in ‘ibādah, both technically and fundamentally.

Keywords: qiblah, ḥadīth, thematic analysis, astronomy, falak

1. Introduction

Qiblah orientation is one of the central issues in Islamic Jurisprudence. During the time of prophet Muhammad, companions observed two qiblahs. The first one was facing al-Masjid al-Aqṣā in Jerusalem before it was changed into their nearby holy mosque of Ka‘bah in Makkah. Facing qiblah is one of the requirements for Muslims to perform their prayers, based on Quranic injunction: *And from wherever you go out (for prayer), turn your face toward al-Masjid al-Haram. And wherever you (believers) may be, turn your faces toward it* (al-Baqarah, 2: 150). Prophet Muhammad offered few guidance on Qiblah, for instance: *From ‘Aṭā’, he heard Ibn ‘Abbās said " When the Prophet entered the Ka‘bah, he invoked Allah in each and every side of it and did not pray till he came out of it, and offered a two-rak‘at prayer facing the Ka‘bah and said, "This is the Qiblah" – (Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī: 383). Jurists argue*

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that this ḥadīth signifies the directly observed orientation of qiblah (*‘ain al-Qiblah*) for people who live nearby Makkah. For those who live far, prophet Muhammad said in one narration: *narrated Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī, the Prophet said, "While defecating, neither face nor turn your back to the Qiblah but face either east or west." Abu Aiyub added. "When we arrived in Sham, we came across some lavatories facing the Qiblah; therefore, we turned ourselves while using them and asked for Allah's forgiveness."* (Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī: 380) (Al-Bukhari, 2011; Hadits, 2011)

Finding the real qiblah orientation during the time of prophet Muhammad was a simple task because of the short distance in the Arabian Peninsula. Even during his stay in Madīnah which is located further north of Makkah and his campaign throughout the Peninsula, mainly northward, Prophet Muhammad simply guided his companions to seek Qiblah orientation somewhere except east and west.

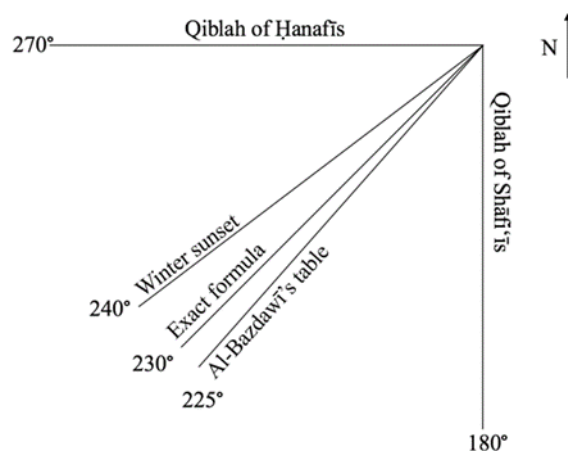
2. Literature Review

2.1 Qiblah After Prophethood

The problem arose after the mass expansion of Islamic territory, especially during the time of Caliph ‘Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb. Under his leadership, the caliphate expanded at an unprecedented rate, ruling the Sasanian Empire and two-third of the Byzantium Empire. Later, Muslims find difficulty in finding Qiblah orientation, resulting in different directions between scholars. Earlier generations simply follow the guidance from Prophet Muhammad literally, and some later scholar attempts to solve it from the mathematical and astronomical approach.

2.2 Criticism of al-Bazdawī

One of the prominent figure who attempts to rectify this problem is al-Bazdawī. Al-Bazdawī reports that the ṣahābah and later Ḥanafīs took the Qiblah in Transoxania, known in Arabic as *Mā Warā’ an-Nahr*, which is the classical name of partial Central Asia, as due west, and that the Shāfi‘īs took it as due south as in Figure 1. He rightly criticizes both traditions, the latter more than the former, since the road to Makkah from Samarqand goes due west rather than



due south (King, 1983).

Figure 1: The different Qiblahs for Samarqand mentioned by al-Bazdawī (King, 1983)

2.3 Al- Bazdawī: Brief Biography

Muhammad bin Muhammad bin al-Ḥusain al-Bazdawī (421H/1030CE - 493H-1100CE), also known as Abū al-Yusr al-Bazdawī, is one of the jurists of Bucharest and later appointed as a judge in Samarqand. He was raised in a well educated family in Bazdah, near to Bucharest. His grandfather, who also known as al-Bazdawī, Shaikh Fakhr al-Islām ‘Alī bin Muhammad, was one of the prominent Ḥanafī scholars and wrote many jurisprudence books. One of his writing is a treatise that documented his criticism on the approach of early scholars in solving the issue of Qiblah orientation. Al-Bazdawī criticizes some follower of al-Shāfi‘īyyah in Transoxania and Khurasan who had never smelled the fragrance of arithmetic found fault with the righteous man of the first generations, and they made the qiblah in the direction between the rising point (of the sun) at (mid-) winter and its setting point. They relied their practice both on some ḥadīth that will be discussed further. This practice, nevertheless, had been proven wrong in guiding local Muslims facing toward at least broader direction (jihhah) of Ka’bah. The objectives of this study are to identify the lack of applied understanding on ḥadīth of Qiblah among Muslims in Transoxania and to conceptualize all related ḥadīth within the real context.

3. Methodology

There are two parts of this research. Firstly, the researcher reviews al-Bazdawī’s treatise on the Azimuth of the Qiblah. The treatise was sent by al-Bazdawī, who was the judge in Samarqand during that time, as an advice to Muslims beyond Transoxania to deal with the disagreement between scholars on determining the azimuth of Qiblah. The hard copy of this 12 pages treatise was well preserved in Egyptian National Library, numbered B 19385 (King, 1983). Upon reviewing this treatise, the researcher is able to investigate the main problem of Muslims in that region to find their accurate Qiblah, which is related to their different approach in understanding prophetic ḥadīth on Qiblah. The finding enables the researcher to employ the second method of this research. The second part of this research heavily relies on thematic analysis of related ḥadīth in Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī. This magnum opus of al-Imām al-Bukhārī (194H/810CE-256H/870CE) is arguably the second most authentic book after al-Qur’ān according to Islamic Jurisprudence (Suliaman, 2019). However, ḥadīth from other Jāmi‘ and Sunan will also be analysed when needed. Thematic analysis is a qualitative analytic method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently, it goes further than this and interprets various aspects of the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There are 6 phases in conducting this research, as follow:

- i. Familiarizing the general idea of a topic
- ii. Generating initial codes
- iii. Searching for themes
- iv. Reviewing themes
- v. Defining and naming themes
- vi. Producing the report

The compilation of all related ḥadīth was analyzed to reflect the objectives of this research and sorted by using computer software Ensiklopedi Hadits by Lidwa Pusaka.

4. Results

In Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī, there are 59 ḥadīth mentioning the word qiblah. These ḥadīth are compiled as in Table 1:

Table 1: al-Qiblah in Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī

	Book	Topic	Ḥadīth number
1	Book of Faith	Prayers as a part of faith	39
2	Ablution	Prohibition of facing qiblah in toilet	141
		Those who relieve themselves between two bricks	142
		Relieving oneself in home	144
3	Prayers	Prayers on the roof, minbar or wood	364
		Prayers on the bed	370, 371
		Prayers regardless on the situations	385, 386
		Spitting in the mosque	391, 392
		Spitting on your left side, or underneath your left foot	397
		If you have to spit, then spit on a section of your cloth	400
		Excavating old grave of ignorant people to build a mosque	410
		Praying facing your brother or others praying people	481
		Prayers won't be invalidated by something else	484, 485
		Prayer is one who whispering his Lord	500
		No chapter	380
	Occupying Maqām Ibrāhīm as the qiblah	383	
	Cleaning the spit on the mosque wall	390	

	Touching wife feet during prayer for prostration	489	
4	Adhān	Uplift you face towards Imām during prayer	707
		Is it permissible to spit if someone observes something during his prayer	711
		No chapter (There are some ḥadīth which Imām al-Bukhārī write in without specific chapter)	785
5	Jum‘ah	Prayers of Istisqā’ (supplication of rain) in al-Masjid al-Jāmi‘	957
		Supplication of rain on the minbar	959
		Prophet did not change his ridā’ location and facing qiblah during supplication	962
		Audible recitation during prayers of istisqā’.	968
		How prophet facing his back towards people during a prayer	969
		Prayers of istisqā’ inside muṣallā	971
		Facing qiblah during istisqā’	972
		Prophet will dismount from his camel for obligatory prayers and facing the hard qiblah	1035
		Performing recommendable prayer on a donkey	1036
		Prohibition of replying salam during prayer	1141
		No chapter	956, 1031
		Supplication during istisqā’ while standing up	967
		Permissible body motion during prayer	1133
		Permissible spitting during prayer	1137

6	Heart reminder	No chapter	5987
7	Pilgrimage	No chapter	1633, 1634, 1735,
8	One fifth portion	No chapter	2871
9	Exemplary biography	No chapter	3639
10	War	No chapter	3818
11	Quranic exegesis	Al-Baqarah verse 142	4126
		Al-Baqarah verse 148	4132
		Al-Baqarah verse 150	4134
		No chapter	4171
12	Adab (manner)	No chapter	5646
13	Asking permission	No chapter	5782, 5804
14	Supplication	No chapter	5867
15	Oath and nadhar	If someone forgot his oath	6174
16	Khabar Ahad	Pledging something while he is forgetful	6711
17	Steadfast with Al-Kitāb and al-Sunnah	Pledging something while he is forgetful	6789
18	Early creation	No chapter	3078

In addition, concerning the al-Bazdawī's treatise, the final finding of the real Qiblah direction was slightly disoriented by just 5° than the accurate direction, as shown in Figure 1. Al-Bazdawī's knowledge of astronomy was such that he confused months and zodiacal signs. He presented various geographical coordinates in his treatise but was apparently incapable of using them to compute the most accurate Qiblah, even by the simple approximate method which was common knowledge amongst contemporary astronomers (King, 1983). However, his finding is more accurate than Ḥanafīs and Shāfi'īs direction.

4.1 Theme of Ḥadīth on Qiblah in Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī

The researcher argues that 59 ḥadīth in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī with the word Qiblah, can be thematically categorized based on these topics:

- i. Ruling on facing of Qiblah during all kind of prayer.
- ii. Basic guidance in searching Qiblah orientation.
- iii. Rulings related to Qiblah.
- iv. Other embedded topics such as reminders, among others.

Based on these topics, the researchers found that there is no ḥadīth explicitly guide Muslims to find their Qiblah far from Makkah in detail. However, prophet Muhammad, based on

limitation of knowledge on science and mathematics during his time, has briefly guided his companions with simple technique in seeking Qiblah in Madīnah.

4.2 Contextual Understanding of Ḥadīth 141

For instance, in ḥadīth 141, prophet Muhammad guided his companions to find Qiblah, not in the eastward nor westward, instead of between north or south. The meaning of this ḥadīth is quite similar to the ḥadīth of al-Tirmidhī mentioned by al-Bazdawī in his treatises. Understandably, the best option between these two is south, because Madīnah is located north. Moreover, the movement of Muslim during the time of prophet Muhammad was just limited to the Arabian Peninsula, with Makkah in the middle. Unless his companions migrate east or west of Makkah, it is more likely the direction of Qiblah is either northward or southward.

Moreover, it is worth noting that the compilation of ḥadīth has culminated during the 9th century (al-Zahrani, 2012). Most of the scholars in ḥadīth were non-Arab who lived beyond Transoxania. The treatise of al-Bazwadi was written 3 centuries later. Based on the timeline, arguably the scholars who lived far from Makkah during that period of time should have good access to the primary and authentic references when it concerns about Qiblah.

Nevertheless, having good access to primary sources does not guarantee a good understanding and application of any issues in fiqh, including Qiblah. According to al-Bazdawī, some of the more recent followers of al-Shāfi'ī in Transoxania and Khurasan who had never smell the fragrance of arithmetic found fault with the righteous men of the first generations and the made the qibla direction between the rising point (of the sun) at (mid-) winter and its setting point. They relied on two Prophetic statements, one of which is their relating from the Prophet, that he said, “*The Qiblah is between the east and west*”, and the second is their likewise relating from him that he Sa'īd, “*Do not face towards or away from the Qiblah when you relieving yourself, rather face east and west*”. Moreover, al-Bazdawī claims that the authenticity of these two Prophetic sayings is not recognized because the reliable authorities did not relate them in their book (King, 1983).

Not only among Shāfi'īs, the position of the Ḥanafīs that the Pole Star should be aligned with a person's two earlobes when he wishes to pray in correct direction, since this would be correct if the latitude of Makkah and the latitude of that region were equal, which is not the case.

4.3 Verification Analysis of 2 Ḥadīth

The researcher finds that in fact, those two ḥadīths are narrated in at least one of the 6 canonical ḥadīth compilation. For instance: *Narrated Muhammad bin Abī Ma'shar, narrated his father from Muhammad bin 'Amr from Abī Salamah from Abū Hurairah, the prophet Muhammad said, “The Qiblah is between the east and west”* (Tirmidhī: 342) (Hadits, 2011). Nevertheless, according to the commentary of Imām al-Tirmidhī within the text of ḥadīth itself, a lot of scholars doubt the authenticity of ḥadīth reported by Najīh Abū Ma'shar, one of the narrator, due to his memorization competency. Hence, it is more likely that this ḥadīth is weak (*da'īf*). However, some jurist accepts weak ḥadīth as a source of juristic ruling in Islam with strict conditions (Zulkipli & Suliaman, 2013). Even if this ḥadīth can be accepted, it is not adequate for Muslims who lives far from Madīnah beyond the Arabian Peninsula to

follow the textual content of this ḥadīth, by simply determining the orientation of Qiblah merely in the area between the east and west. Al-Ṣan'ānī (2009) believes that the ḥadīth indicates the minimum requirement, which is to face in that direction, and not towards the precise location of Ka'bah when someone cannot see it. Al-Suyūṭī adds that this ḥadīth is not applicable to all countries, but the city of Madīnah (Al-Mubarakfūrī, n.d.). As the location of Madīnah is north of Makkah, it is understandable why prophet Muhammad advice his companions to find Qiblah between east and west. Al-Baihaqī adds that this prophetic advice is valid only to the city of Madīnah and other cities that share the same azimuth of Qiblat, either north or east (al-Mubarakfūrī, n.d.).

4.4 Between Textual and Contextual Understanding of Ḥadīth

The researcher argues that during the earlier time after the demise of the prophet Muhammad, Muslim scholars are very keen to preserve the authenticity of the ḥadīth, either from the text, the chain of narration, and the understanding perspectives. Siddiqi (2002) argues that in every period of history in ḥadīth, there lived truth-loving, God-fearing, honest and scrupulous traditionists who neither cared for personalities and parties nor feared power and public opinion. Their sole objective in life was to learn the true traditions of their prophet, to preserve the purity and genuineness, and to propagate them among the Muslims.

Based on these arguments, the researcher suggests that the main challenges among Muslims in Transoxania during that time are hesitation to contextualize prophetic guidance in finding Qiblah direction. Understandably, the contextualization in understanding and applying ḥadīth is very significant to avoid any error in determining any juristic ruling in Islam, especially in the area where scientific and mathematical calculation can be utilized to solve the problem. With the development of scholarship in science and technology, which most of them had been advocated by Muslim great Empires, jurists should be able to be more flexible in understanding some prophetic revelation that fixed in principle but flexible in application. In addition to that, better differentiation between *al-thawābit* and *al-mutaghayyirāt* is a must to establish the miracle of sunnah (*al-i'jāz al-'ilmīy*) (al-Ṣāwī, 1994).

5. Conclusion

Consequently, Muslims should understand that the direction of Qiblah varies with the places and locations. This can be witnessed within the compound Masjid al-Haram itself and should be more evident when considered from other places. If the distance is relatively short, the direction may be determined by a meticulous seeker. However, when the distance is greater, only the astronomers can determine the direction. The necessity of finding Qiblah orientation does not require a precise and accurate practice. Majority of the scholars believe that the minimum requirement for those who lived far from Makkah is just the *jihhah*, or general direction of Qiblah.

Hence, the development of contextualizing and applying the ḥadīth on Qiblah is another milestone of Muslim advancement in science and technology during medieval time. Moreover, it signifies the importance of human science in solving some technical issues in science and technology. From the Islamic perspective, both should be creatively integrated

based on juristic limitation, as Muslim should be believing in revelation first, and must be responsive upon any flexible means within the development of technology.

Acknowledgement

The study was funded by the Ministry of Education (MOE), Malaysia under FRGS grant research funds with reference code FRGS/1/2019/SSI03/UMP/03/1 entitled 'Formulasi Asas Astrometri dalam Penentuan Zon Waktu Solat di Kawasan Tanah Tinggi dan Sempadan di Pahang'

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