

Islamic Politics According to A Muslim Scholar Ibn Hajar Al-'Asqalany

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ABSTRACT

This study wants to explore political thoughts of a major Muslim scholar in the field of prophetic tradition (*Hadith*) and Islamic studies, namely Ibn Hajar Al-'Asqalany. This study is important because a Hadith expert is often generalized as a textualist, and is not adaptable to changes of time (anti-context). The main questions of this study are whether or not the figure of Ibn Hajar can be included within the category of textualist and anti-context scholars, and what are his thoughts on Islamic politics? This study takes its main data from Ibn Hajar's seminal work *Fath al-Bari*, especially on Chapter of Laws (*Al-Ahkam*); as well as from other Hadith books as a comparison. These data are then analyzed through a descriptive-comparative method. The study finds out that Ibn Hajar is better categorized within the category of contextualist Muslim scholar (*'ulama*), whose political thoughts are constructive.

Keywords: *Islamic politics, Ibn Hajar, Al-Ahkam and Fath al-Bari*

1. INTRODUCTION

Discussion on the relationship between Islam and politics or state has always been a heated debate among Muslims. On the one hand, many Muslims believe that Islam is not just ritual teachings of prayer, alms-giving, fasting and pilgrimage: in contrast, Islam is but a combination of these rituals, functioning as main pillars that support the building of Islam: thus Islam is seen as a *nizham* (rule of life).[1] On the other hand, there are Muslims who assumed that religion is basically a number of teachings aimed at improving human's relationship with God to obtain peace in the world and the hereafter. Religion regulates the personal relationship of a human with God, while the state regulates human relations.

These different views are resulted from the ways the sacred texts, both the Qur'an and the prophet tradition (*Hadith*), have described the topics of Islamic politics, as widely discussed in classical books of Islam. In both the Qur'an and Hadith, there is no single instruction that explicitly orders the believers to form a theological state nor a political party that is based on a theological system. There is only a summary of a divinely normative guideline for running a government and a leadership (*imarah* and *khilafah*). This includes the concept of obedience, obligation of an *imam* (leader), a command to be just, condemnation of an abuse of power for personal interest. Moreover, if religion is included as part of ideological foundation of the state, it is common for religion to be abused as a tool to gain authority. Thus, it is not surprising if one could confidently say yes to Islam and no to Islamic political party.

The different points of view have different historical roots within the classical thoughts of Islam. Among classical Muslim thinkers who supported political Islam are Ibnu Rusyd,[2] al-Mawardi,[3] al-Farra', Ibn Taimiyah, Ibn Qayyim, Ibn Khaldun, al-Qurthubi, Hasan al-Banna, Muhammad Abduh, Rasyid Ridho, Iqbal, Maududi,[4] Natsir, including Hasan Nadawi and Qardhawi from contemporary thinkers. Their views are picked up by a young Indonesian politician Anis Matta, stating that the essence of Islam is located in our ability to translate God's laws in our daily lives.[5] On the other hand, there is also a group of classical and contemporary Muslim thinkers who disagree with the marriage between Islam and politics or the state. They are Ali Abdur Raziq, Taqiyuddin Nabhani, Nurkholis Madjid and also Syafii Ma'arif.[6] According to Syafii Maarif, theologically, Islam does not establish and affirm any theory of an Islamic state, that must be followed by Muslims.[7]

Islam is a divine religion revealed by Allah to Muhammad the messenger, carrying a mission of change and a mission of perfecting the teachings of previous prophets and apostles. Its messages are universal, unlimited by time and place. In this regard, Hasan al-Banna asserted that Islam encompasses all aspects of life, including creed, economics, culture, military, social life, civilization, and also politics.[8][9][10][11] Hasan's view is not new in the corpus of Islamic thoughts, because both the Koran and the hadith, not to mention the sharia books, are a clear witness to the fact that discussion on *siyasah* (politics) has been an integral part of Islamic teachings. Within this discussion, Islamic concept of *siyasah* is oriented toward two major purposes: to protect religion and worldly affairs (*hifz din wa siyasat ad-dunya*).[10]

The importance of politics as part of Islamic universal teachings, has rendered studies of politics within the corpus of Islamic intellectual across times and places.

Studies of political Islam Typically, political studies of Islam, and development of political thoughts are conceived and developed by experts in their respective fields. The Islamic treasures thought is filled with a series of big names of scientists who were concerned in the political field. For example, al-Mawardi, al-Farra', Ibn Taymiyah, Ibn Qayyim, Ibn Khaldun are those who have a big hand in developing the concept of Islamic politics. The big names above are not only political drafter but some of them also are practitioners and unfortunate transverses in the world of power in their respective times as well as al-Mawardi. At the conceptual level, the development of siyasah studies is also the subject of other scholars such as the *fuqaha'* and also *muhadditsun* (hadith experts).

His name was Ahmad bin Ali bin Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Ali bin Mahmud bin Ahmad bin Hajar al-Kannani al-Asqalani.[11] He was born on the 12th of Sha'ban in 773 AH outskirts of the Nile, ancient Egypt.[12] He Memorized the Quran from a teacher named Shamsuddin bin al-'Alaf who then became governor of Egypt and also Syamsuddin al-Athrusy. Ibn Hajar was very serious in his studies until he had memorized some primary books like al-Umdah al-Ahkam by Abdulghani al-Maqdisi, al-Alfiyah fi Ulum al-Hadith by his teacher al-Haafizh al-Iraqi, al-Haawi Ash-Shaghir by al-Qazwini, Mukhtashar ibn al-Hajib fi al-Usul and Mulhatu al-'Arab etc. Because of the depth of his knowledge, he was repeatedly forced to be religious judge and finally he accepted it and lived it for 21 years. At the end of his life, he fell ill which took him to death. His corpse was moved to al-Qarafah Ash-Shughra to be buried in the cemetery of Bani Al-Kharrubi, near Ad-Dailami mosque in the tomb of Imam Shafi'i Shaykh As-Silmi Muslim.

Then, who is Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani? Can he be included into conservative scholars who are too strict adapt to the contexts of divine revelation, as this is how they are so far stereotyped? And what are the patterns of al-Asqalani's political thought, motivated by the socio-political conditions of his era?

There were several studies on this issue. The study about the concept of leadership *hadith* is also not new. Malik Ghazali and Acim[13] once discussed the leadership criteria in the hadith perspective, Khoirul Rosyid about leadership of the prophet, Umar Sidiq about leadership in Islam according to the Koran and Hadith, Nurul Iman about the ethics and responsibilities of leaders, and many other studies on this subject. This study is different from the above studies in that it focuses on the political views of a great hadith scholar, Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani.

This study is a library (*library research*) research, considering *syarh tahlili ijtimai'* (or analysis of socio-political backgrounds) as important, and focusing on chapter Al-Ahkam (Laws) of the the book of Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari, which contains prophetic reports on politics, or hadiths siyasah, all of which are referred to by Fathul Bari book, by Imam Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani. The reason of

choosing Fathul Bari is that this *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) book is one of the best and most complete hadith books of Sahih al-Bukhari of the Syafi'i school, a school of *fiqh* which is widely practiced in Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are two books which are used as the main reference. They are Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim. In these two books there are two parts (a collection of chapters) which compile the prophetic hadith about the concept of leadership. In Sahih Bukhari, it is named the *chapter of al-Ahkam*, while in Sahih Muslim, it is named the *chapter of al-Imarah*. In Sahih Bukhari, al-Ahkam is chapter number 73 out of 77 chapters, and consists of 52 main topics on issues of politics.

Among the topics discussed by this chapter are concepts of a leader, leadership of the Quraysh tribe, virtues of wise leaders, concepts of obedience and obedient leaders, ambitions of office, leaders who do not give instructions, leaders who make trouble for the people, protocols in Islam, income of a ruler, gratification of leaders, justice in Islamic leadership, assistant leaders (*bithanah*), *baiat* (vow of commitment), and *istikhlaf*.

Among many discussions about leadership in Fath al-Bari, the main focus of this research is on the concept of leadership, especially on the discussion of obedience to God, the Apostles and Ulil Amr (leaders), the limits of obedience to a leader violating Islamic law, abuse of power for political positions, on conception of a good leader, public facilities and services, and finally the use of bribery and gratification for a position.

2.1. The Law on Obeying a Leader

One of the commentaries in al-Ahkam is true prophetic narrations that invite his society to obey the rulers, not to defy and release the temple lines. The prophet's advice is not just an impetus but is also accompanied by several threats and consequences of disobeying the leader. However, obedience to a leader should be done by the name of devotion to God. Consider the following hadith: "Whoever obeys me he has obeyed Allah and whoever opposes me then he has opposed Allah and who has obeyed my leaders, he has obeyed me and whoever is against me, he has been against God."

Ibn Hajar commented, that "This hadith is a hint from the author of a strong opinion that says that this verse came down about the obligation to obey the leaders, in contrast to those who said he descended for the scholars. This was also corroborated by at-Tabari and we have explained it when interpreting the verse of the letter An-Nisa."

Al-Hafiz reinforces his opinion the other scholar's opinions in explaining the hadith above, such as what was said by ath-Thibby: Allah repeats the word "And obey the Apostle" as a guide to the independence of the Apostle in

terms of obedience and Allah does not repeat it on the word "Ulil Amr" as a signal that among the authorities (ulil amr), some of them are not required to be obeyed. Then Allah continued his words "And if you disagree about something" as if he said if they did not practice the truth. Then, do not obey them and return everything you dispute to the law of Allah and the Apostle."

Al-Hafiz sees that obedience to Ulil Amri (leader) is not as absolute as servant's obedience to Allah and His Messenger, but it is bound by restrictions as long as they obey Allah and His Messenger. Therefore, the sentence *Wa ulil amri minkum* is not affixed with the word *wa athi'u*. Moreover, Al-Hafiz, in another place confirmed that the obedience would disappear when a leader violated the divine constitution. This was also confirmed by al-Aini that obedience to anyone, who was given the mandate of immersion, did not violate religious orders and this had been agreed by the scholars.[14]

The views of Ibn Hajar's obligatory to obey the leader is also in line with other scholars who explained Sahih Al-Bukhari such as Imam Muhammad Anwar Shah al-Kasymiri who sees that it is a must to obey the leaders in politics if there are serious benefits. But if there is no true destination, general and specific benefit, it is not required to be obeyed.[15] Likewise, Ibn Batthal confirmed the command to obey Allah and the Apostles and the leader, even whoever was given the mandate to regulate the affairs of others, in short the *ulama* and *umara* '.[16]

2.2. Ambition to the Power

Imam al- Bukhari also wrote a special sub-chapter in "Chapter al-Ahkam" on "who is not asked for the position will be assisted God ". Consider the following hadith. "O Abdurrahman bin Samurah, don't you ask for a position, because if you get it for asking then you will depend on it, and if you get it without asking then you will be helped and if you swear to something then you see that there is something better than your oath then make your oath (pay kaffarah) and do something better." [17]

Ibn Hajar commented "This hadith is also narrated by at-Tirmizdi from the Abi Uwanah road from Abd A'la ast-Ts'alabiy and also narrated by Abu Daud and Ibnu Majah from Abi Uwanah and Israel bin Abd A'la. Al- Muhallab said, the meaning of *ikrah* (disliked) in this hadith if he was asked even though he was afraid of violating the prohibition then people like this would get help from Allah and be given instructions. The basis is that those who humble themselves because of Allah, Allah will elevate them. Ibn At-tiin said that this hadith is assumed in general, because the Prophet Yusuf ever said "Make me the keeper of wealth the country" as well as Solomon says, "Give me the power" and he added that it could also apply to other than the prophets.[18]

Al Muhallab said, " The ambition to the power is the main cause of the killing of human beings, the spilling of blood, treasure deprived, tarnished honour and the magnitude of the destruction of the earth. Furthermore, the sorrow would happen when he was killed or deposed or died.

Then, he will regret for entering the realm of power because he will be judged for what he has done and he has no more chance to fix it. There are scholars who exclude if he gets power because of the death of the previous ruler and no one can replace him but himself, plus if he does not take it there will be damage and chaos.

Ibn Hajar said, "And this is not contrary to what was conveyed by the previous *hadith* where he got that power either by asking or not. The phrase "Hirsh" (ambition) indicates that if he runs when he was worried the loss of security the same as the person who got it without asking because there is no ambition and this is usually the case. Sometimes, the ambition is also forgiven if the office becomes obligatory upon him because the mandate of power to an imam (ruler) is obligatory, whereas for a *qadhi* (judge) *fardhu kifayah* if there are others".[17]

2.3. Leaders Are People's Counselor

Imam Bukhari also explained that a leader is a role model for the people, he is protective and proactive. His advice and commandments are obeyed, his words are respected and carried out. Leaders are not always identical with the object of public criticism but a good leader also gives advice to people. Consider the following *hadith*, which means, "There is no leader who leads his people from among the Muslims then he dies while he deceives them then Allah forbids him to heaven."

Al-Hafiz asserts that leaders who do not advice members and being loved by his members would get the convenience in incoming to heaven in the day after.

2.4. Good Leaders Simplify Service

Imam Bukhari also included several hadiths which explain that a leader should help his people. The prophet Muhammad ever mentioned that "The leader of a people is their servant".[19] Therefore, if there is a leader who still likes to complicate the affairs of his people with the unacceptable sharia reason, such leader is included in prophet's threat that mentioned in the hadith below, which means. "I heard the Prophet said," Whoever listens to, then God will listen to them on the day of Resurrection, and whoever that troublesome God will against them in the last day. they said, give us testament! He said, the first thing that will rot from the human body is the stomach, so don't you put something in it except the good things. And whoever can have no veil between himself and heaven with no bloodshed even though a handful so he should do it. I say to Abu Abdillah, what says the Messenger of Allah says is Jundub, he replied, Jundub. "

2.5. A Gift to the Lord

In order to provide a maximum service, a good leader, in an Islamic perspective, is someone who cannot be bribed,

because a bribe will deflect someone from the straight path of law. Al-Bukhari put an important discussion about it in the chapter of *al-Ahkam*, where the Prophet reminds the importance of maintaining neutrality and objectivity in carrying positions. The efforts to eliminate neutrality in carrying out tasks when dealing with bribes, gifts and tributes in any form which ultimately aims to change policy and favor the interests of individuals or groups. Imam Bukhari quoted a history like this: "The prophet had appointed someone as an employee of the collection of zakat from the Banu Asad named Ibn Utbiyah, and when he came to report his work he said this to you (baitul maal) and this was a gift for me, then the Prophet stood up and climbed the pulpit, and likewise Sufyan said, the Prophet rose in the pulpit while praising and worshiping Allah and said: "What's wrong with an employee that we sent and then he came and said this for you and this for me. Why he did not just sit at the house of his father or mother and he noticed whether anyone gave him a gift or not. For the sake of my soul in his hand, if he receives his gift, then on the Day of Judgment, he will be carried over his neck, if it is a camel or cow then groans, and if we udder he will bleat. Then the king raised his hand while saying so his armpit looked white, " O Allah, I have not delivered it." [17]

These are some of the discussions and studies that have been discussed in chapter of *al-Ahkam* in the book of Fath al-Bari. From the explanations of the themes above, it shows that Imam Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, in explaining the political hadiths, despite taking the *manhaj Salaf* (Salafi method), was of a moderate position, not stuck in the *conflic of intrest* as happened in the early days of false hadith for political boost and power. Ibn Hajar solidified the opinion of the scholars in the process of making explanation and determining his political views.

Indeed, the study of the political hadiths must be enlivened since the political themes have always been a hot topic among Muslims today. Furthermore, politics with interests sometimes erode and drag the religious symbol and excuses. According to Makrum, quoted from Mustafa Siba'i's opinion, that due to political reasons (*siyasa*), many falsification of *hadith* are mainly related to the authority fields. [20]

3. CONCLUSION

From the explanation above, it is concluded that Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani is a scholar who has an integrative understanding of Islam, especially in seeing the relationship between religion and politics or state power. This tendency is a result of his comprehensive understanding of Islam as described in many verses and prophetic traditions.

In general, thoughts and ideas of politics of Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani recorded in the comments (*ta'liqat*) in *Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari* are in line with the Sunni's ideology that emphasized the revelations, rather than logic as the majority of experts of hadith did. The main leadership, according to al-Asqalani, is firstly, a leader who has a

good social text; secondly, has a good understanding and knowledge that makes him able to distinguish between good and bad; and thirdly, a good leader is a strong leader who keeps clean physically and spiritually. Therefore, any abuse of authority such as gratification and corruption - which is now a common enemy for the establishment of *good and clean governance* - will disappear. Imam al-Ghazali made a simple analogy, "The world is the field of the afterlife, and religion will not be perfect except with the world while the authority and religion are twins. Religion is the pillar, while the ruler or leader is the guardian. Buildings without poles will collapse and buildings with no guard will disappear. The regularity and discipline will not be realized unless with the authorities or leaders. [21] According to Nadirsah, the key word in leadership is the leader himself. [22]

This study is done from the perspective of political thought which was seen by the hadith scholars (*muhadditsin*) who were not only experts in the prophetic texts but also having comprehensive knowledge about the contexts of implementation of the prophetic revelation on political issues. Therefore, studies such as this can be continued by referring to the texts of other Muslim religious scholars (*ulama*).

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