



Al-Bait in the Quran: A Thematic Analysis of Its Semantic Variations and Contextual Applications

Husni Fajrin¹, Safa Alrumayh², Muhammad Irfan³

¹STAI Pengembangan Ilmu Al-Qur'an Sumatera Barat, Indonesia

²University of Zawia, Libya

³Universitas Islam Negeri Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar, Indonesia

✉ husnif2000@gmail.com *

Abstract

Al-Bait is one of the significant terms in the Quran that encompasses a wide range of meanings and appears in diverse linguistic, social, and spiritual contexts. This diversity indicates that *Al-Bait* does not merely refer to a physical house or dwelling but also conveys broader theological and symbolic dimensions. This article examines the semantic variations and contextual applications of *Al-Bait* in the Quran through the thematic exegesis (*tafsir maudhu'i*) approach. Employing a qualitative method with *content analysis*, the study draws upon Quranic verses containing the term *Al-Bait* as primary data, supported by classical and contemporary tafsir literature as secondary sources. Data were collected through document analysis and interpreted by considering the linguistic, historical, and theological contexts of each occurrence. The findings reveal four principal meanings of *Al-Bait* in the Quran: i) a dwelling place that provides shelter and security for human beings; ii) *al-bayt* in the sense of nighttime, indicating a temporal setting; iii) *Baitullah* as a sacred center of worship representing spiritual devotion and Muslim unity; and iv) the dwelling of animals, particularly the spider's house, which serves as a metaphor for the frailty of relying upon anything other than Allah. These findings demonstrate that the meaning of *Al-Bait* is multidimensional and context-dependent. The article contributes to the advancement of Quranic semantic studies and thematic exegesis while enriching scholarly understanding of the relationship between space, symbolism, and spirituality in the Quran.

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INTRODUCTION

Within the discourse of Quranic exegesis, the concept of *al-bait* occupies a unique and strategic position because it does not merely refer to a physical structure used as a dwelling, but also represents various theological, social, spiritual, and civilizational dimensions. Etymologically, the term *al-bait* is associated with a place of residence, refuge, and return, while its Quranic usage develops into a symbol with rich and diverse meanings (Kaltsum & Anita, 2021). The Quran uses *al-bait* to refer

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to human dwellings, the House of Allah (*Bayt Allah*), the houses of the prophets, places of worship, and even the dwellings of animals as media for conveying moral and theological lessons (Marpaung, 2021). This diversity of usage indicates that *al-bait* cannot be understood from a single perspective, but must instead be examined in relation to the context of each verse and its function within the broader structure of the Quranic message.

The study of *al-bait* is important because the concept of the house in the Quran is not limited to physical space, but also reflects values of security, tranquility, identity, family, worship, and the human relationship with Allah. In the contemporary context, where a house is often understood merely as a place of residence, the Quran offers a broader perspective by positioning the house as a means of cultivating spirituality, morality, and social life (Budiman et al., 2020; Ferulano, 2021). Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of *al-bait* can contribute to the development of Quranic exegesis and semantics, as well as strengthen Muslims' understanding of the function of space in religious and social life (Millah et al., 2024).

The significance of this study is further reinforced by the fact that the term *al-bait* occurs 54 times in the Quran and is distributed across 28 surahs in various grammatical forms and contexts of usage. This frequency indicates that *al-bait* is not merely an ordinary term, but forms part of the Quran's conceptual structure and conveys multidimensional messages. An initial examination of the relevant verses indicates that *al-bait* does not only signify a house as a place of residence, but is also used in relation to the night (*al-bayt*), places of worship, and animal dwellings that convey particular symbolic messages. Such semantic diversity highlights the need for a systematic and comprehensive study to develop a more objective understanding of the concept of *al-bait* in the Quran (Hayati et al., 2022).

Previous studies have examined the concepts of *bait* and *abl al-bait* from various perspectives. A study of the meaning of *abl al-bait* in *Tafsir al-Misbah* demonstrates that the term is primarily understood in the context of the family and household of the Prophet Muhammad (Aziz, 2019; Hayati et al., 2022). A semantic study of *abl al-bait* using Toshihiko Izutsu's approach found that the basic meaning of the term refers to the inhabitants of a house, which subsequently develops into the meanings of family and the descendants of the Prophet (Adrivat et al., 2024). Another study of *abl al-bait* in Nusantara Quranic exegesis emphasizes that the term encompasses the Prophet's family, his wives, and the descendants of Banu Hashim (Engkizar et al., 2023, 2024). A comparative study of Sunni and Shi'a exegesis also demonstrates differences in the interpretation of the scope of *abl al-bait*, reflecting the theological constructions of each tradition (Kabba, 2024).

Other studies have examined the interpretation of *abl al-bait* through critical hermeneutics, highlighting the importance of historical and contextual readings in understanding the term (Haleem & Shah, 2020). Quranic semantic studies have likewise demonstrated that terminology derived from the root *bait* encompasses a broad semantic network and cannot always be reduced to its purely lexical meaning (Sahin, 2021). Meanwhile, research on *abl al-bait* from a Shi'a perspective emphasizes particular figures who are accorded a distinctive status within the structure of religious doctrine (Al Furqon & Riaz, 2025). Collectively, these studies make important contributions to understanding particular aspects of *bait* and *abl al-bait*. However, most remain focused on identifying specific actors, examining the Prophet's family, or addressing theological debates between religious traditions.

The diversity of references to *al-bait* in the Quran further demonstrates its multidimensional function. On the one hand, *al-Bait al-Haram* functions as the qiblah, a center of worship, and a symbol of Muslim unity. On the other hand, the Quran uses the term *al-bait* to refer to houses whose sanctity must be respected, the houses

of the prophets, mosques honored by Allah, and the spider's house, which serves as a parable for the fragility of relying on anything other than Allah. This diversity of contexts raises fundamental questions about how the Quran constructs the meaning of *al-bait*, how its various meanings are interconnected, and what implications these meanings have for understanding spirituality, space, and the social life of Muslims.

Previous studies have generally focused on the concept of *abl al-bait*, the identification of members of the Prophet's family, Sunni-Shi'a exegetical comparisons, or semantic analyses of particular verses. To date, relatively limited research has systematically mapped the entire range of occurrences of the term *al-bait* in the Quran and classified its variations in meaning and function through a thematic exegesis (*tafsir maudhu'i*) approach. Consequently, the relationship between the linguistic meanings, textual contexts, and theological functions of *al-bait* has not yet been fully represented within a single comprehensive analytical framework.

The novelty of this article lies in its comprehensive mapping of the occurrences of *al-bait* in the Quran through a combination of thematic exegesis (*tafsir maudhu'i*) and content analysis. Unlike previous studies that focus primarily on *abl al-bait* or selected verses, this article identifies, classifies, and analyzes the various meanings of *al-bait* according to their linguistic, historical, and theological contexts, thereby developing a more comprehensive conceptual construction of the meaning and function of *al-bait* in the Quran.

This article is expected to enrich the field of Quranic semantics and contribute to the further development of thematic exegesis in Quranic studies. In addition, the findings demonstrate that *al-bait* represents not only physical space but also a symbol of protection, a center of spirituality, a marker of communal identity, and a medium for civilizational formation. Practically, the findings may serve as a reference for academics, exegetes, educators, and Muslim communities in understanding the contemporary relevance of Quranic values concerning the home, sacred spaces, and social life.

METHODS

This article examines the meaning and contextual usage of the term *al-bait* in the Quran through a thematic exegesis approach (*tafsir maudhu'i*). The study was conducted systematically by identifying all verses related to the research theme and subsequently analyzing them in terms of linguistic features, the contexts of revelation, and the interpretations of Quranic exegetes. This approach enables the researcher to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the various meanings and functions of *al-bait* in the Quran, thereby providing a more integrated interpretation than an examination of individual verses in isolation. In Quranic studies, the thematic exegesis method is considered effective for uncovering Quranic concepts comprehensively because it integrates verses addressing a common theme into a unified analytical framework (Engkizar et al., 2025; Mustafa et al., 2026; Syaifudin et al., 2025).

Research Approach and Design

This study employs a qualitative approach using content analysis within the framework of thematic exegesis (*tafsir maudhu'i*). A qualitative approach was adopted because the study focuses on interpreting, understanding, and exploring the meanings contained in textual data rather than on quantitative measurement (Gorichanaz, 2018; Sismita & Jamal, 2024). Content analysis was employed to identify, classify, and interpret the various meanings of *al-bait* found in the Quranic verses according to their respective contexts of usage. Through this method, the data were analyzed in depth to identify patterns, relationships, and meaning structures embedded in the Quranic text (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Lindgren et al., 2020; Renjith et al., 2021).

Data Sources

The data sources consisted of primary and secondary data. The primary data comprised all Quranic verses containing the term *al-bait* and its various derivations. The secondary data were obtained from several authoritative Quranic commentaries, including *Tafsir al-Quran al-'Azim* by Ibn Kathir, *Mafatih al-Ghayb* by Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Maraghi* by Ahmad Mustafa al-Maraghi, and *Al-Jami' li Abkam al-Quran* by al-Qurtubi. In addition, the study drew upon books, journal articles, theses, and dissertations related to Quranic semantics, thematic exegesis, and studies of *al-bait*. The combined use of primary and secondary sources was intended to provide a comprehensive understanding while strengthening the validity of the research findings (Millah et al., 2024; Nurdin, 2021).

Research Instruments

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument (*human instrument*) responsible for the processes of data collection, selection, interpretation, and analysis (Heeringa et al., 2017). To support these processes, several supplementary instruments were used, including the Quranic text, Quranic commentaries, Arabic dictionaries, *Mu'jam al-Mufabras li Alfaẓ al-Quran al-Karim*, Quran search software, and relevant academic references. These instruments assisted the researcher in identifying occurrences of the term *al-bait*, examining its linguistic contexts, and comparing the interpretations of various Quranic exegetes concerning its meanings (Amalia et al., 2023; Engkizar et al., 2026).

Data Collection Technique

Data were collected through documentation by identifying and compiling all Quranic verses containing the term *al-bait*. The identified verses were subsequently grouped according to their contexts of usage, thematic focus, and classification as Makkiyah or Madaniyah. The relevant Quranic commentaries and scholarly literature were then examined to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the meanings, functions, and purposes underlying the use of the term in the Quran. Documentation was selected as the primary data collection technique because it is appropriate for text-based research and literature-oriented studies that focus on the analysis of written documents (Sanches et al., 2024; Sugiarto, 2025; Wijaya, 2012).

Data Analysis Technique

The data were analyzed by adapting the thematic exegesis procedures developed by Abd al-Hayy al-Farmawi. The first stage involved determining the research theme, namely *al-bait* in the Quran. The second stage involved collecting all verses related to the selected theme. The third stage involved arranging the verses according to the chronology and contexts of revelation where relevant. The fourth stage involved examining the relationships among the verses and their correlations with the surahs in which they occur. The fifth stage involved examining the interpretations of Quranic exegetes concerning the selected verses. The sixth stage involved analyzing the verses by considering relevant hadiths and the views of scholars of Quranic exegesis. The seventh stage involved classifying and synthesizing the entire body of data to identify the variations in meaning, function, and context of the term *al-bait* in the Quran. Through these stages, the study developed a systematic conceptual mapping of *al-bait*, enabling the formulation of objective and comprehensive conclusions in accordance with the research objectives (Abdussalam et al., 2021; Nabila & Barizi, 2024).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Statements Concerning the Concept of House in the Quran

The analysis of the selected Quranic verses and their interpretations in *Tafsir al-Maraghi* reveals that the concept of *al-bait* encompasses diverse meanings and functions. These meanings extend beyond the notion of a physical dwelling to

include social, spiritual, theological, and moral dimensions. The findings can be classified into four principal categories: the house as a human dwelling, the house in the sense of nighttime, the House of Allah, and the house as an animal dwelling. This classification demonstrates that the Quran employs the semantic field associated with *bait* in different contexts to convey broader messages concerning human relationships, divine protection, worship, and the limitations of worldly reliance. The classification of these meanings is presented in Figure 1.

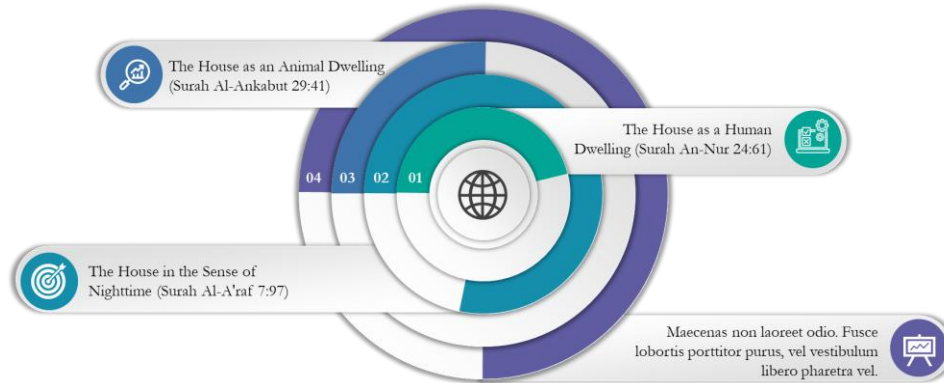


Fig 1. Classification of *al-Bait* and Its Contextual Meanings in the Quran

Figure 1 illustrates that the Quranic concept of *al-bait* cannot be reduced to a single physical meaning. In the context of human dwellings, the house functions as a protected social space that facilitates family relationships and mutual interaction. In the context of nighttime, the related expression *bayat* highlights the condition of human vulnerability and the possibility of divine punishment when people become complacent. In the context of the *Bayt Allah*, the house represents a sacred center of worship, security, unity, and monotheistic identity. Meanwhile, the spider's house functions as a metaphor for the fragility of protection based on sources other than Allah. These findings demonstrate that the semantic field of *bait* in the Quran operates across interconnected social, spiritual, theological, and moral dimensions.

The House as a Human Dwelling (Surah An-Nur 24:61)

لَيْسَ عَلَى الْأَعْمَى حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيضِ حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْأَنْفُسِكُمْ أَنْ تَأْكُلُوا مِنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ آبَائِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ إِخْوَانِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَخْوَانِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَعْمَامِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ عَمَّاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَخْوَالِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ خَالَاتِكُمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْهُنَّ مَفَاحِجُهُنَّ أَوْ صَدِيقَهُنَّ ۚ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَأْكُلُوا جَمِيعًا أَوْ أَشْتَاتًا ۚ فَإِذَا دَخَلْتُمْ بُيُوتًا فَسَلِّمُوا عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ تَحِيَّةٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُبَرَكََةً طَيِّبَةً ۚ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

In *Tafsir al-Maraghi*, the interpretation of Surah An-Nur 24:61 expands the meaning of *al-buyut* (houses) beyond that of mere physical structures by emphasizing the principles of ease and the removal of hardship in social interactions. The verse explicitly permits individuals to eat in the homes of their relatives without requiring special permission, which al-Maraghi views as a form of facilitation within Islamic law and an acknowledgment of the rights associated with maintaining kinship ties (Al-Maraghi, 1974). Furthermore, his interpretation highlights this legal concession as an effort to avoid excessive formality that could instead weaken or sever familial relationships. Thus, the house in this context functions as a protected private space while simultaneously serving as a social institution that remains open to strengthening bonds of brotherhood, provided that the ethical principles established by Islamic law are observed (Anshari & Rahman, 2021; Harika et al., 2024; Taufiq, 2022). This interpretation shifts the perception of the house from merely a physical boundary to a living and dynamic entity that actively contributes to strengthening social relationships within the Muslim community.

The House in the Sense of Nighttime (Surah Al-A'raf 7:97)

أَفَأَمِّنَ أَهْلُ الْقُرَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا بَيَاتًا وَهُمْ نَائِمُونَ

In *Tafsir al-Maraghi*, the interpretation of Surah Al-A'raf 7:97 highlights the term *bayat* as referring to an event occurring at night, particularly while people are asleep. In this context, the expression emphasizes a state of stillness and unawareness, representing communities that have become complacent in a false sense of security (Aldreabi et al., 2023; Mulyana, 2023). Al-Maraghi emphasizes that the expression *ahl al-qura* (the inhabitants of the towns) is not merely limited to a geographical location, but also describes communities that have established seemingly stable systems of life, including economic, political, and social structures, and consequently consider themselves completely secure from potential disruption (Anshari & Rahman, 2021; Supriadi, 2022). The verse reveals a divine pattern in which punishment may arrive precisely when a community experiences the height of its sense of security, often during the night when human vigilance is at its lowest. This interpretation extends the conceptual significance of *bayat* to a condition in which an apparently stable system of life remains vulnerable before the power of Allah. It emphasizes that security established without awareness of divine authority is ultimately an illusion. Al-Maraghi therefore presents this verse as a warning that the stability of a civilization does not ultimately depend on the physical structures it builds, but on the collective piety of its inhabitants.

The House of Allah the Exalted (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:125)

وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَمْرًا وَاتَّخِذُوا مِن مَّقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى ۖ وَعَهِدْنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَن طَهِّرَا بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْعَاكِفِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ

In *Tafsir al-Maraghi*, the interpretation of Surah Al-Baqarah 2:125 establishes that the term *al-bait* (the House) specifically refers to the *Bayt Allah*, or the Ka'bah in Makkah, which functions as a center of worship and a symbol of monotheism for humanity since the time of Prophet Ibrahim. Al-Maraghi emphasizes that this house is not merely an ordinary physical structure, but a sacred institution elevated by Allah to serve as a place of gathering and a secure place of return for His servants. The concept of the house in this context connects spiritual and historical dimensions. The Maqam Ibrahim is not merely a marker associated with a place of prayer, but also bears witness to the struggles, devotion, and piety of Prophet Ibrahim and his family (Khurshid, 2025). Furthermore, al-Maraghi emphasizes that the establishment of the Ka'bah as the qiblah and as a place for performing pilgrimage and circumambulation constitutes a manifestation of Allah's honoring of His House, while simultaneously reinforcing the religious identity of Muslims. Thus, the house in this interpretation becomes a symbol of Muslim unity, submission to Allah, and a spiritual legacy that connects the past, present, and future of Islam within a continuous framework of worship that remains relevant across generations (Meftah & Mottaghi, 2015).

The House as an Animal Dwelling (Surah Al-Ankabut 29:41)

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ كَمَثَلِ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ اتَّخَذَتْ بَيْتًا ۖ وَإِنَّ أَوْهَنَ الْبُيُوتِ لَبَيْتُ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ ۚ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

In *Tafsir al-Maraghi*, the interpretation of Surah Al-Ankabut 29:41 presents the meaning of *bait* (house) as a profound metaphor for the weakness and powerlessness of systems of protection established by those who reject faith in Allah. Al-Maraghi interprets the "spider's house" not merely as the literal dwelling of an animal, but as a symbol of the fragility of every form of protection sought from sources other than Allah. Regardless of how intricate the spider's web may appear physically, it cannot provide adequate protection against wind, rain, or other dangers. Likewise, the belief systems, ideologies, and worldly dependencies constructed by the polytheists, although they may appear strong and sophisticated, are ultimately fragile and easily destroyed because they lack a firm foundation in monotheism. Al-Maraghi emphasizes that this verse serves as a warning against being deceived by the illusion

of worldly power, because the only true source of protection is found in making faith and *tawhid* the foundation of one's spiritual life (Makmudi, 2022; Vasconcelos, 2020).

CONCLUSION

This article has achieved its objective of examining the semantic variations and contextual applications of the term *Al-Bait* in the Quran through a thematic exegesis (*tafsir maudhu'i*) approach. The analysis demonstrates that *Al-Bait* is a multidimensional Quranic concept whose meaning extends beyond the notion of a physical dwelling to encompass broader spiritual, temporal, symbolic, and social dimensions. The diversity of its usage indicates that the Quran constructs *Al-Bait* as a dynamic concept whose meaning is determined by the linguistic and thematic context of each verse, reflecting the richness of Quranic expression and worldview.

The novelty of this article lies in its comprehensive mapping of the term *Al-Bait* across the Quran by integrating its various contexts and semantic functions within a single analytical framework. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on *Ahl al-Bait*, *Baitullah*, or specific Quranic passages, this study offers a holistic understanding of *Al-Bait* as a Quranic concept with interconnected meanings and functions. The findings contribute to the advancement of Quranic semantic studies and thematic exegesis by providing a broader perspective on the relationship between space, spirituality, symbolism, and human existence in the Quran. Furthermore, this study offers a conceptual foundation for future research on Quranic spatial concepts and their relevance to contemporary Islamic thought and civilization studies.

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Author contribution

Husni Fajrin: writing-original draft preparation and visualization, **Safa Alrumayh:** data curation, and editing, **Muhammad Irfan:** analysis, conceptualization, methodology.

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