

AL-FĀTIḤAH AS A PARADIGM OF INTERPRETATION: A STUDY OF M. DAWAM RAHARDJO'S THOUGHT

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Abstract: *Thought on the methodology of interpreting the Qur'an in Indonesia cannot be separated from several contemporary Muslim scholars. Some of them gave a new explanation that developed from the treasures of classical concepts. This paper discusses the thoughts of M. Dawam Rahardjo, one of the contemporary Muslim scholars, on al-Fātiḥah as a paradigm of interpretation of the Qur'an. This surah, based on the explanation of the Prophet Muhammad, is only referred to as "the mother of the Qur'ān" (umm al-Qur`ān) because it summarizes the central teachings of the Qur'an. However, the Prophet's explanation was not explored in more depth, so that it was only believed to have no methodological implications in the interpretation of the Qur'an. Using the historical-philosophical approach, the author will examine Dawam's thoughts from the perspective of originality, in terms of continuity-change and epistemology, in terms of the rationality of thought. This paper concludes that, firstly, this idea, although initially based on the Prophet's statement, is further developed by saying that al-Fātiḥah is a surah whose verses are muḥkam and whose content is universal. So that in interpretation, it must be referred to as a paradigm when interpreting verses in other surahs which explain the details. Second, in the context of the study of thought, by its nature, Dawam's thought tends to be monolithic-rationalism. Although he draws this thought from traditional sources (nash, hadīts), this method of interpretation has a rational character and makes these traditional sources the primary source, which he developed.*

Keyword: *al-Fātiḥah, paradigm, the mother of the Qur`an, muḥkam, mutasyābih*

INTRODUCTION

Each thought is related to the content of the thought and the method of thinking that underlies it. Likewise, the interpretation of the Qur'an consists of two aspects, namely the content of interpretation which is the product of the interpreter's thought, and the method of interpretation which is the way taken by the interpreter in interpreting the Qur'an.

The interpretation of the Qur'an, either in the product or method, has experienced rapid development in the Middle East or other parts of the Islamic world, such as Southeast Asia. In terms of products of interpretation (commentaries), as

surveyed by several scholars, such as Nashruddin Baidan,¹ Howard M. Federspiel,² Islah Gusmian,³ and M. Nurdin Zuhdi,⁴ The Indonesian interpretation of the Qur'an has experienced rapid development in the modern and contemporary periods. It is also marked by the development of thought in the methodology of interpreting the Qur'an. The methodology of interpretation gives birth to the product of interpretation. One of the Indonesian prolific writers on this subject is M. Dawam Rahardjo, who is known as the author of *Ensiklopedi al-Qur`an*, also wrote the method of interpreting the Qur'an in his works, *Paradigma al-Qur`an: Metodologi Tafsir dan Kritik Sosial*.

Anthony H. Johns once criticized the lack of studies (surveys) on the study of the Qur'an in Indonesia by expressing, "The present state of Quranic studies in Indonesia and Malaysia is not well surveyed".⁵ According to Johns, the study of the Qur'an in Indonesia and Malaysia was not well surveyed. Although this statement was made decades ago (1984) by looking at variants of Middle Eastern commentaries, such as Sayyid Qutb's *Fi Zhilāl al-Qur`ān*, in the archipelago, the statement is still valid, as evidenced by the lack of severe studies on literature about the Qur'an. Howard M. Federspiel, for example, only surveyed 58 popular literature on the Qur'an in Indonesia, and Islah Gusmian only surveyed 24 commentary studies during the period 1990-2000. It does not yet consider what Johns calls "Qur'anic studies", which includes works of interpretation products and works of exegetical methodologies that scholars have not adequately studied.

Several scholars, such as Howard M. Federspiel⁶ and A. H. Johns⁷, who study Nusantara commentaries, tend to see the development of the interpretation study in the

¹ See Nashruddin Baidan, *Perkembangan Tafsir al-Qur`an di Indonesia* (Solo: Tiga Serangkai, 2003).

² See Howard M. Federspiel, *Popular Indonesian Literature of the Qur`an* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1994). The work was translated into Indonesian by Tajul Arifin with the title *Kajian al-Qur`an di Indonesia: dari Mahmud Yunus Hingga Quraish Shihab* (Bandung: Mizan, 1996).

³ Islah Gusmian, *Khazanah Tafsir Indonesia ; Dari Hermeneutika hingga Ideologi* (Jakarta: Teraju, 2003).

⁴ M. Nurdin Zuhdi, *Pasaraya Tafsir Indonesia: Dari Kontestasi Metodologi hingga Kontekstualisasi* (Yogyakarta: Kaukaba, 2014).

⁵ Anthony H. Johns, "Islam in the Malay World: An Explanatory Survey with Some Reference to Quranic Exegesis," in *Islam in Asia II: Southeast and East Asia*, ed. Raphael Israeli and Anthony H. Johns (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1984), 155.

⁶ Among the conclusions is "the model of works on the interpretation of the Qur'an that exist in Indonesia basically comes from the works of Egyptian Muslim writers a hundred years ago". Federspiel, *Popular Indonesian Literature of the Qur`an*, 292.

archipelago as the "extension" of Middle Eastern commentaries even though its originality is based on the context of the archipelago.

Studies on the methodology of the interpretation of the Qur'an are not carried out in-depth. They do not cover the latest developments, such as the studies of Anthony H. Johns: "Islam in the Malay World: An Exploratory Survey with Some Reference to Quranic Exegesis"⁸, "Quranic Exegesis in the Malay World: In Search of Profile"⁹, "Quranic Exegesis in the Malay-Indonesian World: An Introduction Survey"¹⁰, and "She Desired Him and He Desired Her (Qur'an 12: 24): 'Abd al-Ra'ûf's Treatment of an Episode of the Joseph Story in *Tarjumân al-Mustafîd*"¹¹; the studies by Howard M. Federspiel in "Popular Indonesian Literature of the Qur'an" surveyed 58 books and by Islah Gusmian in his master's thesis at UIN Sunan Kalijaga, which was later published under the title "*Khazanah Tafsir Indonesia: Dari Hermeneutika hingga Ideologi*" surveyed 24 commentaries for ten years (1990-2000). Even the studies on the development of interpretation in Indonesia do not examine the problem of interpretation methods such as M. Yunan Yusuf, "*Karakteristik Tafsir al-Qur'an di Indonesia Abad XX*" (1992)¹² and the undergraduate thesis of Izza R. Nahrowi at the Faculty of Ushuluddin UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, "*Karakteristik Kajian al-Qur'an di Indonesia*" (2002) on developments up to the 19th century AD".

⁷ Johns, "Islam in the Malay World," 155. Another similar article that emphasizes more on the influence of Middle Eastern commentaries on interpretations in Indonesia is "Quranic Exegesis in the Malay World: In Search of Profile" in Anthony H. Johns and Andrew Rippin, "Qur'anic Exegesis in the Malay World: In Search of a Profile," in *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 257–78. The last article (2005) also only contains a general portrait of the study of interpretation in Indonesia which does not yet represent the latest developments. See Anthony H. Johns, "Qur'anic Exegesis in the Malay-Indonesian World: An Introductory Survey," in *Approaches to the Qur'an in Contemporary Indonesia*, ed. Abdullah Saeed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 17–36. This part of the article has been translated into Indonesian by Syahrullah Iskandar, "Tafsir Al-Qur'ân Di Dunia Indonesia-Melayu", *Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an* 1, no. 3 (2006): 459–86.

⁸ Johns, "Islam in the Malay World."

⁹ Johns and Rippin, "Qur'anic Exegesis in the Malay World: In Search of a Profile."

¹⁰ Johns, "Qur'anic Exegesis in the Malay-Indonesian World."

¹¹ Anthony H. Johns, "'She Desired Him and He Desired Her' (Qur'an 12: 24): 'Abd al-Ra'ûf's Treatment of an Episode of the Joseph Story in *Tarjumân al-Mustafid*," *Archipel* 57, no. 2 (1999): 109–34. Johns, among others, notes that through his early studies of the *Tarjumân*, the author has a wealth, complexity, and intellectual sharpness, which is represented through variations in emphasis and choice of language style that marks the clarity of expression. The presentation is also very humane.

¹² M. Yunan Yusuf, "Karakteristik Tafsir Alquran Di Indonesia Abad Ke XX," *Jurnal Ulumul Quran* 3, no. 4 (1992).

In this article, an interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary approach is applied. First, it uses the historical approach, specifically in originality in terms of continuity and change. Of the three types of historical thought studies (text studies, historic context studies, and studies of the relationship between texts and society), the research focuses on the first model, namely the study of thought through texts, namely the literature on the methodology of interpreting the Qur'an by the Indonesian writers. The focus is on the genesis of thought, its development, and its change. The genesis of thought is related to the origin that influences a thought.¹³ The development and change of thought are related to the journey of thought in history, which is colored by changes in previous thinking and new creativity.¹⁴ Second, it uses the philosophical approach, especially epistemology, in terms of the rationality of thought. Therefore, a joint approach to the historical approach colors the direction, a historical perspective that emphasizes the history of thought (history of ideas, history of thought), which is said to be part of, or identical with intellectual history.¹⁵

The theory applied in this study is the distinction between the ratio (reason) and tradition (tradition). The ratio is human thought or reason, epistemologically the source of knowledge, while tradition is the source of religion, such as revelation and transmitted hadith. Ratio produces rational knowledge, which is sought by humans (acquired knowledge) in addition to experience (empirical), while tradition produces knowledge that is given or revealed/transmitted (revealed knowledge). Ratio and tradition are two inseparable things in explaining religion, so what is called rationalism and traditionalism is only a matter of emphasis, not the interpretation of one of them.¹⁶ Therefore, this emphasis makes both of them have two directions: monolithic in the sense of being seen as an offer of one-way thought and the primary source, and eclectic in the sense of being seen as the offer that is selectively rich in direction and rich in resources.

M. DAWAM RAHARDJO: LIFE AND WORKS

¹³ Kuntowijoyo, *Metodologi sejarah* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2003), 192.

¹⁴ See examples of studies that focus on this issue of change and development in Kuntowijoyo, 194.

¹⁵ Kuntowijoyo, *Metodologi sejarah*; Daniel Wickberg, "Intellectual History vs. the Social History of Intellectuals," *Rethinking History* 5, no. 3 (2001): 383–95.

¹⁶ On reason and tradition, especially in matters of Islamic theology, see Binyamin Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1998), ix-x; In the context of ethics, see Majid Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 31-45.

He was born in Tempur Sari Village, Solo, Central Java, on April 20, 1942. He is the son of Muhammad Zuhdi Rahardjo and Muthmainnah. He was born into a religious and educated family. His father was an interpreter of the Qur'an, and he was the first to instill Dawam's love for the Qur'an. However, according to his recognition, the interest in studying the Qur'an began in his forties when he became the director of LP3ES in the 1980s.¹⁷

Dawam obtained his early education at Bustanul Athfal Muhammadiyah in Kauman. Then, he continued his education at Sekolah Rakyat Loji Wetan in the morning and Madrasah Ibtida'iyah Muhammadiyah at the Solo Grand Mosque in the afternoon. Subsequently, he continued the tsanawiyah level at Madrasah Diniyah al-Islam, Solo, although, according to his admission, he was cut off midway in the second grade. His education continued at the First Junior High School of Solo, an elite school in the area at the time. His introduction to Islamic religious knowledge started from early education. However, his attention to interpretation begins here. During that time, he began to read works on interpretation, such as Bahrum Rangkuti's *Kandungan al-Fatihah*. After his interest arose in the study of the Qur'an, he became acquainted with Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar*, Mohammad Ali's *Holy Qur'an*, which was translated from *The Holy Qur'an* by Col. Moh. Bachrun, and the commentary of Mahmud Yunus.¹⁸

For the high school level, Dawam studied at Manahan High School. Then, he was educated through the America Field Service (AFS) program in Boise, Idaho, United States. He studied at Borah High School for one year. There, he became acquainted with the diversity of religions and even participated in the rituals of other religions. He studied Christianity. Every Sunday, he goes to church and participates in the congregation of church singers and the Sunday Morning Class that teaches the Bible at the First Presbyterian Church.¹⁹

Next, he continued his diploma at the Faculty of Economics, Gajah Mada University, Yogyakarta, in 1969. He obtained an honorary doctorate in Islamic economics from the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University of Jakarta and became

¹⁷According to another source, he was born in the village of Belawarti.

¹⁸ M. Dawam Rahardjo, *Paradigma Alquran: Metodologi Tafsir dan Kritik Sosial* (Jakarta: Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban (PSAP) Muhammadiyah, 2005), 1-2; Rino Riyaldi and Muhd. Najib Abd Kadir, "Pemikiran Dawam Rahardjo dalam Penafsiran Ayat-ayat al-Qur'an", paper submitted at the 2nd International Research Management & Innovation Conference (IRMIC 2015), Langkawi, 26-27 August 2015, 4.

¹⁹Riyaldi and Abd Kadir, "Pemikiran Dawam Rahardjo dalam Penafsiran Ayat-ayat al-Qur'an", 5.

a professor in development economics at the University of Muhammadiyah Malang.²⁰

In 2013, he received an award as a human rights defender from the Yap Thiam Hien Foundation.²¹

After completing his undergraduate diploma, he worked in the credit department at Bank of America from 1969 to 1971. Then, since 1971, he joined the Institute for Economic and Social Research, Education and Information (*Lembaga Penelitian, Pendidikan dan Penerangan Ekonomi Sosial/ LP3ES*), Jakarta, with his last position as director (1980-1986).²² He has served as Chairman of the Foundation for the Study of Religion and Philosophy (*Lembaga Studi Agama dan Filsafat/ LSAF*), general chief of Prisma magazine, Chair II of the Expert Council at the Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals Association (*Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia/ ICMI*), President Director of Agribusiness Development, Editor-in-Chief of *Ulumul Qur'an: Journal of Science and Culture*, lecturer at the Jakarta Management Development Education Institute (*Lembaga Pendidikan Pengembangan Manajemen/ LPPM*), and President Director of The International Institute of Islamic Thought Indonesia (IIIT Indonesia).²³

Dawam got to know the interpretation of the Qur'an when he became the director of LP3ES. He then studied the methodology of interpreting the Qur'an from the literature which generally did not come from direct language sources, except for translations, such as *Sejarah dan Pengantar Ilmu al-Qur'an/Tafsir* by M. Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqiy, *Sejarah Tafsir al-Qur'an* by Ahmad al-Syirbāshī, *Modern Moslem Koran Interpretation* by JMS Baljon, and *The Qur'an and Its Exegetes* (sic, Its Exegesis) by Helmut Gort (sic, Gatje).²⁴

Dawam also said that he conducted interviews and attended lectures by several scholars on the methodology of interpretation. He was interested in the study of K.H. Abbas Dasuki, a figure of al-Islam in Solo who had studied in Mecca for 19 years (1935-1953). His majlis uses the commentary of Sayyid Qutb, *Fī Zhilāl al-Qur`ān*. The Kiai does not explain the interpretation of the surahs coherently, but only picks out certain verses, then interprets them concerning the life history of the Prophet Muhammad as a basis for understanding. Dawam welcomes the method of

²⁰ Rahardjo, *Paradigma Alquran*, 214.

²¹ See http://yapthiamhien.org/index.php?find=news_detail&id=197 (28 September 2015).

²² M. Dawam Rahardjo, *Perspektif Deklarasi Makkah: Menuju Ekonomi Islam* (Bandung: Mizan, 1993).

²³ Rahardjo, *Paradigma Alquran*, 214.

²⁴ Rahardjo, 23.

interpretation that connects the text to a context like this because then, the interpretation will be more comprehensive because of the possibility of analogical interpretation. It is one of the methods he offers in interpreting the Qur'an.²⁵

Dawam has produced several works, including: *Esei-esei Ekonomi dan Politik* (1983), *Transformasi Pertanian, Industrialisasi, dan Kesempatan Kerja* (1985), "Bumi Manusia dalam al-Qur'an", in *Insan Kamil: Konsepsi Manusia menurut Islam* (1985), *Etika Bisnis dan Manajemen, Kapitalisme Dulu dan Sekarang* (ed., 1986), *Perspektif Deklarasi Makkah Menuju Ekonomi Islam* (1987), *Intelegensi, Intelektual, dan Perilaku Politik Bangsa: Risalah Cendekiawan Muslim* (1992), *Ensiklopedi al-Qur'an: Tafsir Sosial Berdasarkan Konsep-konsep Kunci* (1996), and *Masyarakat Madani: Agama Kelas Menengah dan Perubahan Sosial* (1999).

AL-FĀTIḤAH AS A PARADIGM OF INTERPRETATION

In his work, *Ensiklopedi al-Qur'an*, Dawam writes his assumption, "... we can develop a methodology for interpreting the Qur'an based on information from the Qur'an itself".²⁶ With this assumption, he tried to dig up information about al-Fātiḥah as the mother of the Book (*umm al-Kitāb*) and the mother of the Qur'an (*umm al-Qur'ān*), then used it as a paradigm of interpretation. If the Qur'an is an encyclopedia that contains various problems, then Surah al-Fātiḥah, according to him, is "the Qur'an in a nutshell".²⁷ This expression is idiomatic. The word "nutshell" means the core of the content. Originally this term means "peanut shell",²⁸ but it possibly means "in brief".

Al-Fātiḥah, as the Qur'an in a nutshell, means that it is the core (short and dense) of the content of the Qur'an. By offering al-Fātiḥah as a paradigm of interpretation, Dawam departs from the status of this surah, which has solid content even though it only contains seven verses. It is as mentioned in the QS. al-Ḥijr: 87 as "seven repeated verses" and as "the great Qur'an". Starting from this, he proposes a hypothesis: (1) seven verses in al-Fātiḥah are explained repeatedly in the entire contents of the Qur'an; (2) The essence of the entire content of the Qur'an is contained in Surah al-Fātiḥah; (3) The

²⁵ Rahardjo, 24–32.

²⁶ M. Dawam Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi al-Qur'an: Tafsir Sosial Berdasarkan Konsep-konsep Kunci* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2002), xix.

²⁷ Rahardjo, *Paradigma Alquran*, 60; Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi Al-Qur'an*, 22.

²⁸ John M. Echols and Hassan Shadily, *Kamus Inggris-Indonesia* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1996), 399.

contents of the Qur'an entirely explain the seven verses in al-Fātiḥah; (4) The seven verses in al-Fātiḥah completely divide the content of the Qur'an, or the entire content of the Qur'an can be divided equally by seven verses of al-Fātiḥah, so that (5) al-Fātiḥah is called the great Qur'an because al-Fātiḥah is the original Qur'an in a nutshell or the Qur'an in essence.²⁹

To prove the truth of the hypothesis, he did realize it was not an easy thing. However, the methodological steps he offers can be reconstructed as follows:

He was first exploring key terms in Sūrat al-Fātiḥah, which are also used in other verses in the Qur'an. The key terms are: *ḥamdalah, rabb, 'ālamān, raḥmān, raḥīm, mālik, yawm, al-dīn, 'ibādah, isti'ānah, širāt, mustaqīm*, etc. Searching like this, as he has done in writing *Ensiklopedi al-Qur'an*, is in principle the same as the work of the interpretation method in studying the vocabulary of the Qur'an (*tafsīr mawḍū'ī li muṣṭalaḥ Qur'ānī*). The search is not only with similar key terms but also to all of its synonyms, such as *širāt*, which has a meaning related to *sabīl* and *ṭarīq*.³⁰ By examining the use of key terms in al-Fātiḥah used in other verses of the Qur'an and by tracing their synonyms, Dawam wants to obtain what he calls the "structure of meaning" and "evolutionist dimensions".³¹

As exemplified in the word *Rabb*, the search for key terms is carried out on their use in surahs of the Qur'an and the development of their meaning. In that way, it is known that the word *Rabb* has developed and emphasized meaning in the early surahs to the later ones: God the Creator; who cares for and is glorified; who educates and teaches knowledge to humans, to God the Highest, who creates, perfects, measures, and guides.³²

In addition to searching for meaning in this way, information from the commentaries is also needed. *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Fātiḥah* has been written, for example, by Mawlānā Abū al-Kalām Azad, Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, Ḥasan al-Bannā, Sayyid Quṭb, and even by Indonesian writers, such as Bey Arifin in *Samudra al-Fatihah* and Bahrum

²⁹ Rahardjo, *Paradigma Alquran*, 61; Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi Al-Qur'an*, 23.

³⁰ Each term actually has specific meanings that are not contained by other terms. Therefore, in the interpretation, the view is usually adopted "there is no synonymy" (*'adam al-tarāduf*) because each term has its own root meaning, then develops, and has a special meaning when used in the context of certain sentences.

³¹ Rahardjo, *Paradigma Alquran*, 62; Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi Al-Qur'an*, 23.

³² Rahardjo, *Paradigma Alquran*, 58; Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi Al-Qur'an*, 29.

Rangkuti in *Kandungan al-Fātiḥah*. Others can also be used as references, such as al-Mawdudi's and Hamka's commentaries.³³

According to Dawam, why should other verses be explored in the repetition of key terms? Substantially, indeed Surah al-Fātiḥah is the essence of the Qur'an. Al-Fātiḥah, as reflected by its name, is the opening, while the other suras are like the body. In addition, methodologically, Dawam considers the verses in Surah al-Fātiḥah as *muḥkam* verses, while the verses in other surahs are *mutasyābih*. Dawam says,

“The methodical element referred to above is looking at the entire contents of the Qur'an with al-Fātiḥah—which functions as an opening tool or key to understanding the verses in the body of the Qur'an. Al-Fātiḥah is very well understood, but in fact, its terms on a micro-level contain a deep meaning or contain a substance of meaning. As a whole that is easy to understand, al-Fātiḥah contains *muḥkamāt* verses. Facing the *muḥkamāt* al-Fātiḥah, the body of the Qur'an has the position of *mutasyābihāt* verses, namely similar verses which function to explain *muḥkamāt* verses.”³⁴

According to Dawam, Sūrat al-Fātiḥah is referred to as *muḥkam* because the verses are easy to understand. It does not explain why other surahs are called *mutasyābih*, whether they are challenging to understand. Dawam explains more about why al-Fātiḥah is called *muḥkam*. It seems that Dawam has an analogy as follows: al-Fātiḥah is referred to as *umm al-kitāb* (the mother of the Holy Book), while in QS. Āl' Imrān: 7 and in a hadith narrated by al-Tirmidhi, both conclude that al-Fātiḥah is *muḥkam*.³⁵

He means "al-Fātiḥah as a paradigm" for the function of this surah as "the principle, glasses, magnifying glass, or microscope", or as a "foundation", "springs", "umm al-Qur`ān" (the mother of the Qur'an), "umm al-Kitāb" (the mother of the Holy Book), "al-Sab' al-Matsānī" (seven repeated verses), and "al-Qur`ān al-'Azhīm" (the Great Qur'an) to highlight other verses.³⁶

In dealing with *mutasyābihāt* verses, Dawam takes a method by confronting them with *muḥkam* verses, namely the verses in al-Fātiḥah. He means the confrontation as not gaining understanding by "filling in" between the two kinds of verses, but from one direction, namely knowing the meaning of the verse in each surah from the

³³ Rahardjo, *Paradigma Alquran*, 62; Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi Al-Qur'an*, 24.

³⁴ Rahardjo, *Paradigma Alquran*, 63; Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi Al-Qur'an*, 24.

³⁵ Rahardjo, *Paradigma Alquran*, 63; Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi Al-Qur'an*, 24.

³⁶ Rahardjo, *Paradigma Alquran*, 63; Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi Al-Qur'an*, 24.

perspective of al-Fātiḥah, not the other way around, where other verses become a perspective to see the verses in al-Fātiḥah. The method he offered is precise as applied by the interpreters, namely "referring the understanding of *mutasyābih* verses to *muhkam* verses" (*radd al-mutasyābih ilā al-muhkam*).³⁷

He was second interpreting verses or surahs (especially short ones) other than al-Fātiḥah, which automatically constitutes the aspired *mutasyābihāt* verses or surahs, judging by the suitability of their content with the contents of al-Fātiḥah. Dawam did not specify the interpretation mechanism. However, from his interpretation of Sūrah al-Lahab or al-Masadd, it appears that he, as usual interpretation, does not ignore the background of the revelation of the surah, both based on history and especially *ḥadīths asbāb al-nuzūl*. When interpreting this surah, Dawam applies a semiotic approach, namely an interpretation that emphasizes a deeper meaning behind the use of symbols.³⁸ He stated that the surah did not describe the reproach against Abū Lahab as an individual but instead described him as a person who opposed the truth. The nickname "father of the burning fire" and the phrase Abū Lahab's two hands will perish" are expressions that describe the futility of Abū Lahab's efforts. It is also important to note that the semiotic reading he applies is closely related to his identification that this surah is *mutasyābihāt*. The *mutasyābihāt* nature of this surah appears because it essentially does not designate Abū Lahab as a reproached individual but can generally apply to anyone anywhere and at any time. Now, and throughout the ages, he insisted, we meet people like Abū Lahab and his wife.³⁹

Third, drawing the essence of the content of the interpreted verse or surah from the aspect of the content in the surah is in line with one or several parts of the content of al-Fātiḥah. From his interpretation of Surah al-Lahab, Dawam takes the essence that this

³⁷ In *al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, al-Suyūfī mentions one definition of *muhkam*, namely "a verse that can stand alone" (*mastaqilla bi nafsih*) in the sense that the verse has a clear meaning so that it does not have to (although this is also recommended). to clarify the meaning) requires other verses to explain it. On the other hand, *mutasyābih* is defined as "a verse that cannot stand alone, unless its understanding is restored by referring to another verse" (*mā lam yastaqilla bi nafsih illā bi raddih ilā ghayrih*). Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī, *Al-Itqān Fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.), 2. From that definition, it is clear that the *mutasyābih* verse must be understood within the framework of the *muhkam* verse.

³⁸ About Semiotics, see T. K. Seung, *Semiotics and Thematics in Hermeneutics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); Arthur Asa Berger, *Pengantar Semiotika: Tanda-Tanda dalam Kebudayaan Kontemporer*, trans. M. Dwi Mariantio (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2010); Roland Barthes and M. Ardiansyah, *Elemen-Elemen Semiologi.: Sistem Tanda Bahasa, Hermeneutika Dan Strukturalisme* (Yogyakarta: IRCiSOD, 2012); Yasraf Amir Piliang, *Bayang-bayang Tuhan: Agama dan Imajinasi* (Bandung: Mizan Publika, 2011), 157–73.

³⁹ Rahardjo, *Paradigma Alquran*, 65; Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi Al-Qur'an*, 26.

surah illustrates a group that Allah is angry with because of their attitudes and actions against the truth, which in al-Fātiḥah is called the key term "*maghdhūb*".⁴⁰

Fourth, tracing the key terms in their substance to other verses. For example, in the Sūrah al-Mā'ūn, the wrathful person is the one who treats orphans harshly, does not encourage feeding the poor, neglects the purpose of their prayer, and exhibits deeds that are considered good but do not do acts of love. According to Dawam, in the shorter sūrahs that were revealed during the Makkiyyah period, it is effortless to find a direct translation of the content of al-Fātiḥah. For example, Sūrah al-Ikhlāsh entirely describes QS al-Fātiḥah: 12, Sūrah al-Kāfirūn exclusively describes QS al-Fātiḥah: 5. Such shorter surahs, according to him, are easier to identify in the description of the content of al-Fātiḥah. The long sūrahs, which contain various issues, according to him, can be traced in their harmony with the content of al-Fātiḥah by (1) assessing surah by surah, the mechanism of which has not been explained by Dawam;⁴¹ or (2) through sūrah grouping;⁴² or (3) through the group of sentences;⁴³ or (4) through the part of the explanation. For example, according to Dawam, the word of Allah, "They are on the right path (guided) from their Lord, and they are the lucky ones" (QS. al-Baqarah: 5) is a further explanation of "al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm" mentioned in QS. al-Fātiḥah: 6, and describes the group that gets the favors mentioned in the QS. al-Fātiḥah: 7 whose qualifications are described as pious in QS. al-Baqarah: 34.⁴⁴

Dawam likens al-Fātiḥah as a microscope used to examine other verses because this surah contains a complete and straightforward summary of the teachings of the Qur'an so that the verses are *muḥkamāt* that can be used as a barometer that other verses

⁴⁰ Rahardjo, *Paradigma Alquran*, 65–66; Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi Al-Qur'an*, 26.

⁴¹ In assessing the central idea in a surah, even though it is a long one, usually the scholars who apply *al-tafsīr al-mawdhū'ī fī al-sūrah* (thematic interpretation centered on a surah) take several ways, among others, from naming the surah and derived themes, which appears in each verse group. Therefore, it is possible that the first method, according to Dawam, is explained by the second method, namely grouping the surahs.

⁴² Perhaps the intention is to divide the surah into groups of verses (*maqā'ī' al-sūrah*) which are commonly known in the workings of *al-tafsīr al-mawdhū'ī fī al-sūrah* (thematic interpretations centered on a surah), where the goal is to seek a united topic in the surah, by looking for the central idea and linking between groups of verses in terms of continuity of conversation about a topic.

⁴³ Sentence groups are not identical with verse groups because, in one verse, there may be several sentences, or vice versa, only fragments of sentences that are connected with sentences before or after a verse. Therefore, perhaps what Dawam meant was really a group of sentences in verse because the grouping of verses was referred to as "grouping surahs".

⁴⁴ Rahardjo, *Paradigma Alquran*, 67–68; Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi Al-Qur'an*, 27–28.

can refer to. Dawam expresses the philosophy of al-Fātiḥah, which has implications for the search to these other verses, as follows:

Islam, as reflected in the entire Qur'an, is a complete idea. However, the Qur'an wholeness should be explained simply. It is al-Fātiḥah that reflects the simple idea of wholeness. Al-Fātiḥah elevates a string of verses into one unified idea. With al-Fātiḥah as the key, we unlock the information contained in the Qur'an. With the muḥkamāt al-Fātiḥah, the *mutasyābihāt* verses become clear. That is why, in interpreting a verse, we try to find and look for the main idea, with al-Fātiḥah as the criterion or microscope. In that way, deviations from the interpretation of the main idea, as far as possible, can be avoided.⁴⁵

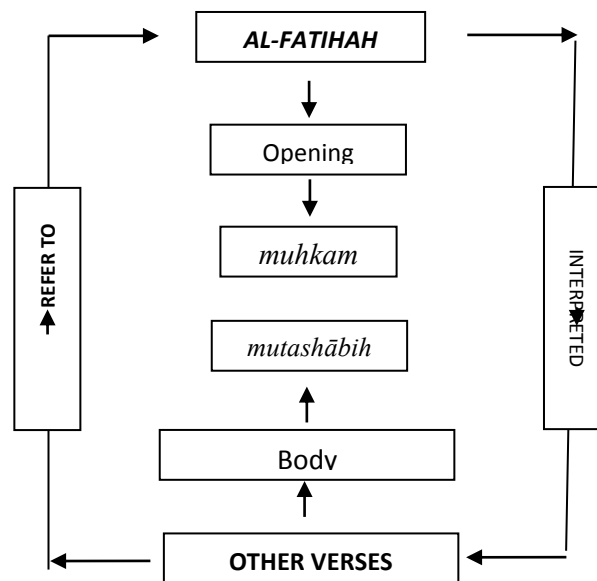
Fifth, interpreting the key terms that have been explored in other verses with a more profound interpretation and applying a comprehensive approach. The meaning of each key term in al-Fātiḥah is broad in scope because of the position of this surah as the mother of the Holy Qur'an (*umm al-Kitāb*). It needs to be explained extensively through other verses. For example, the key term “*maghdhūb*” (wrathful person) can be explained by the history of how the Jews were exposed to the wrath of God. However, Dawam immediately drew the moral message behind that history. According to him, the statement that the Jews were exposed to God's wrath was just an illustration because the real target was the pattern of actions that caused God's wrath that could happen to anyone. Likewise, the term *rabb al-'ālamīn* can be traced to the evolutionist development of its meaning in various verses of the Qur'an. The Qur'anic concept of *Rabb* as the One who creates maintains, regulates, and perfects the universe can be understood from other verses, for example, about the law of gravity of the earth (QS. al-Mursalāt: 25) and the measurements in Allah's creation (QS. al-Qamar: 49). The concept requires an interpretation involving biology, geology, and so on. Another example given is the key term *rahīm*, which shows the pattern of human action in that God's love is given according to human actions. For example, people who repent of their mistakes will get love from God (QS. al-Baqarah: 160, Āl' Imrān: 128). This word in several verses of the Qur'an is used in conjunction with other words, such as *ghafūr rahīm* (forgiving and loving) and *tawwāb rahīm* (repeated mercy). According to Dawam, the use of expressions like this can be studied from the perspective of sociology or social psychology.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Rahardjo, *Paradigma Alquran*, 68; Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi Al-Qur'an*, 28.

⁴⁶ Rahardjo, *Paradigma Alquran*, 70–71; Rahardjo, *Ensiklopedi Al-Qur'an*, 28–29. See also interpretations of *rahmān* and *rahīm* in Rahardjo, 220–26.

Scheme 1: The flow of interpretation of the Qur'an with al-Fātiḥah as a paradigm

Scheme:
Al-Fātiḥah as the Paradigm of Qur`ān Interpretation



CONSIDERING THE ORIGINALITY OF DAWAM'S THOUGHT

Dawam suggested that Sūrah al-Fātiḥah be used as a paradigm for interpreting the Qur'an. The surah as "the mother of the Qur'an" and the essence of the entire content of the Qur'an has long been known among scholars and Muslims in general because it is explained in the texts. According to him, Surah al-Fātiḥah can be used as a paradigm of interpretation because the dense content deserves to be called the "opening," and the verses are also *muḥkam*. Meanwhile, other surahs are the "body", and some of their verses are *mutasyābih*. The relationship between *muḥkam* and *mutasyābih* verses is resolved by the rule or benchmark "the necessity to refer *mutasyābih* verses to *muḥkam* verses". Interpreters have long applied this benchmark. In fact, among the Mu'tazilah, this standard is applied more intensively, especially for defending the sect because the

classification of *muḥkam-mutasyābih* is an ideological choice. This standard implies that al-Fātiḥah verses must be a reference for other verses.

On the other hand, the relationship between the opening and the body needs to be regulated. The body is an explanation, so it must be referred to as the opening. Dawam has explained how the mechanism of referring the body verses to the opening verses in al-Fātiḥah, for example, through tracking key terms in al-Fātiḥah, such as *Rabb*, *rahīmān*, and *rahīm* used in verses in other surahs in a thematic method work, including tracking the development of the meaning of keywords. The referral mechanism is rational. Unlike the interpretation of the verse with the history being explained, in the reference as in the Dawam method, the interpreter's reasoning plays a role in connecting the body to the opening. This method is still a discourse that is raised.

The originality offered by Dawam is to use Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, which was previously known as the mother of the Qur'an and used as a reference for interpretation, now he has raised it as an interpretive paradigm. Dawam stated that it was necessary to prove by in-depth research his assumption that Surah al-Fātiḥah as the mother of the Qur'an, could be used as a paradigm of interpretation. On the other hand, Dawam arbitrarily refers to the verses in al-Fātiḥah as *muḥkam*, while verses in other surahs are all *mutasyābih*.

ASSESSING THE RATIONALITY OF DAWAM'S THOUGHT

Dawam's thought on the methodology of interpretation can be categorized as rationalist-monolithic thinking. This trend of thinking carries a methodology of interpretation from the old treasures (*turāts*) of Islam as the primary source, while other elements support it. Although this methodology is taken from the old treasures of Islam, the way the methodology works is developed by its bearers to have a rational character.

Rationality is seen from several aspects. First, from the work of the interpretation method offered, the process of interpreting verses is carried out through a rational mechanism, for example, in terms of referring to other verses as an explanation of the verses in Surah al-Fātiḥah. The search for verses that are categorized as explanations necessarily requires the interpreter's ability to identify rationally. It is not easy to relate many verses in the Qur'an, which Dawam says are *mutasyābih* verses with the verses in this surah. The principle of verse-by-verse interpretation (intertextuality), although it seems to move from verse to verse, remains a rational process because it relies more on the identification of the interpreter. Although several *tafsīr bi al-ma'tsūr*,

through the interpretation of the Prophet Muhammad, have been explained by him, the collection is only slight. Most of the verses of the Qur'an require the interpreter to do intellectual exercise in this context. Second, as a paradigm, Dawam wants this surah to be a kind of surah that becomes a frame of reference in interpreting other verses. This interpretation mechanism makes this surah a general, global standard and is considered a "paying" for other verses outside this surah. It is the same as the offer of an interpretive approach with *maqāshid al-syarī'ah* and *maqāshid al-Qur`ān*. The noble goals of the shari'a or the main goals of the Qur'an become a reference frame that is referred to through rational thinking mechanisms of the interpreter so that the verses being interpreted are in the same direction or soul with those goals. It is also the same as the interpretation mechanism that applies the rules of interpretation (*qawā'id al-tafsīr*), where there are formulations of provisions that are "universal" (there is relativity, even ideological subjectivity in the formulation of some of the rules and their application) which applied through the analogy of a deductive model to the verse being interpreted.⁴⁷

Although it is rational, this method has a monolithic character in various sources from a tradition of classical Islamic thought. The term monolithic here is interpreted as one-way, one-source, and not dynamic. Dawam offers explanations from various hadith sources that this surah is the mother of the Qur'an, which was later developed as a paradigm of interpretation.

CONCLUSION

From the description above, it can be concluded that Dawam's thought of a monolithic-rationalist interpretation method. Starting from the explanation from traditional sources, that Sūrah al-Fātiḥah is the mother of the Qur'an, he developed a method of interpretation by making this surah a paradigm. The term interpretation paradigm means that the solid and comprehensive content in the verses in this surah makes the frame of reference for interpreting the verses outside this surah. The mechanism of referring to the verses outside of this surah and the mechanism of elaboration, namely the reverse movement, presupposes a more detailed search and sharper reasoning that relies on the

⁴⁷ See the different views on the rational character of the interpretation mechanism with these interpretations in Khālid 'Uthmān al-Sabt, *Qawā'id al-Tafsīr: Jam'an Wa Dirāsatan*, vol. 2 (Egypt: Dār Ibn 'Affān, 1421), 48–49. Here, al-Sabt's view to avoid the view that the mechanism of this interpretation as *tafsīr bi al-ra'yi* seems to depart from the view that it connotes a reprehensible interpretation, as is also evident from the definition put forward by Mannā Khalīl al-Qaṭṭān.

interpreter's reasoning. Thus, even though it departs from traditional sources, the format of the interpretation method it packs is rational.

Dawam built the concept of the interpretation method from one source, which he later developed. From this source aspect, his monolithic character appears when he offers this treasure of classical thought as his primary source. He also offers a sociological and thematic approach to the interpretation of the Qur'an. However, in this context, his thinking about al-Fātiḥah as a paradigm of interpretation is monolithic from its source.

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