

RELIGIOUS MODERATION WITH THE CONCEPT OF UMMATAN WASATHAN: Tafsir Al-Qur'an surah al-Baqarah verse 143 through Ma'na Cum Maghza

Muhamad Slamet Yahya¹, Huzdaeni Rahmawati², Zulfatun Ni'mah³

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Saifuddin Zuhri, ^{2,3}Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta
Jalan Jenderal Ahmad Yani No. 40A, Purwokerto, Central Java
E-mail: yahyadian04@gmail.com, huzdaenir@gmail.com, zulfa.annima@gmail.com

Abstract: In order for Indonesia to develop as a plural and diverse nation, religious tolerance is very important. The idea of Ummatan wasathan in the Qur'an is comparable to the word moderation. This idea instills the importance of being a rational, open and fair person. Religious moderation is so important because national pluralism does not always bring positive things. There are many problems caused by differences in ethnicity, race, and even religion. This paper aims to analyze the concept of Ummatan Washatan in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 143 through ma'na cum magazha. This research is descriptive and qualitative in nature, using the interpretation approach of ma'na cum magazha in understanding the meaning in the content of the verse. The research findings reveal that ummatan wasathan, which means that people are given the freedom to make decisions by making full use of their intelligence. Research also reveals that differences are God's will and serve as a test, and that giving advice or preaching must be done in a fair, open, and non-violent way.

Keywords: Ummatan Washatan, Religious Moderation, Ma'na Cum Magazha

Abstrak: Agar Indonesia dapat berkembang sebagai bangsa yang majemuk dan beragama, toleransi beragama sangat penting. Ide Ummatan wasathan dalam Al-Qur'an sebanding dengan kata moderasi. Ide ini menanamkan pentingnya menjadi orang yang rasional, terbuka, dan adil. Moderasi beragama menjadi begitu penting karena kemajemukan bangsa tidak selamanya mendatangkan hal yang positif. Terdapat banyak permasalahan yang dilatarbelakangi oleh perbedaan suku, ras, bahkan agama. Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk mengalisis konsep Ummatan Washatan dalam Surah Al-Baqarah ayat 143 melalui *ma'na cum magazha*. Penelitian ini bersifat deskriptif dan kualitatif, dengan menggunakan pendekatan tafsir *ma'na cum magazha* dalam memahami makna dalam kandungan ayat tersebut. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa ummatan wasathan, yang berarti bahwa orang diberi kebebasan untuk membuat keputusan dengan menggunakan sepenuhnya kecerdasan mereka. Penelitian juga mengungkapkan bahwa perbedaan adalah kehendak Allah dan berfungsi sebagai ujian, dan bahwa memberi nasihat atau dakwah harus dilakukan dengan cara yang adil, terbuka, dan tanpa kekerasan.

Kata Kunci: Ummatan Washatan, Moderasi Beragama, *Ma'na Cum Magazha*

INTRODUCTION

Al-Qur'an is a guideline for Muslims as a reference for their life. The Al-Qur'an has many treasures that can be used as problem solvers. One of them is the concept of *Ummatan Wasathan*, which means middle people. Islam exists as a middle way (*tawassut*) with various soothing concepts in faith, worship, morals, relations between fellow human beings, and law. (F. T. Rahman & Azizah, 2021). Nonetheless, extremism in religion is a phenomenon that often occurs in the trajectory of the history of Muslim life. The propositions in Islam always show calls for an iitidal attitude (middle attitude, moderation) and forbidding excess, which is known as *ghuluw* (going too far), fanatical, smart-ass, *tashdid* (complicated). In the Qur'an, the word 'adl which means middle, is also mentioned in other words, namely *al-Wast*, and *al-Qist*, which all have a middle meaning or take a middle attitude.

Likewise, there is the word *al-wazn* or *al-mizan* which means balance or a balanced attitude. Ibn Taymiyah said that with justice and balance, a strong civilization will be realized because justice is a very strong moral foundation for the development of human civilization throughout history. Conversely, without justice there will be a threat to the survival of humanity. Indonesia is a democratic country, so different views and interests often occur. (Saifuddin et al., 2022). Likewise, in religion, the state has an important role in ensuring the security of the people to embrace and practice their

religion by the beliefs and beliefs chosen. (Abror, 2020).

In the view of Islam, of the many religions, ideologies, and philosophies that have surfaced in the world, only Islam will survive the times' challenges. This opinion has even become a belief for some of them. This view is based on the undeniable fact that only Islam has universal and comprehensive characteristics. This characteristic then necessitates several privileges inherent in Islam and not in other religions. (Shihab, 2019). For the Indonesian people, diversity is believed to be destiny. Not asked for, but is a gift from God who creates, to be accepted and not to be bargained for (taken for granted).

As a pluralistic country, conflicts can occur between one another. Therefore, there must be a concept formulated so that it becomes the basis for thinking to behave that can benefit all human beings. As a religion that is *rahmatil lil alamin*, Islam does not order its followers to judge and blame people outside their religion. Of course, Islam gives grace that gives mutual respect to every adherent of religion. One concept that is currently being widely discussed by many figures is religious moderation. Religious moderation means prioritizing balance in terms of moral beliefs and character as an expression of certain individuals or groups' religious attitudes amidst the diversity of social facts surrounding us. (Hasan, 2021)

In the Qur'an the concept of religious moderation often uses the proposition of *surah al-Baqarah* verse 143. The word used

in this concept is *ummatan washatan* which means the *ummah* whose position and position are in the middle. But of course, it will be more interesting if the concept is seen from a different viewpoint or interpretation approach. One of them uses the *ma'na cum magza* approach. This approach is a method of interpreting the Koran in which one explores the original historical meaning (*ma'na*) understood by the first audience and develops that meaning in its significance (*maghza*) to be applied to contemporary times. This approach can become a warm solution amid society, because usually, this approach uses conditions or relevance to life in contemporary times. (Rezi, 2020).

This study aims to analyze the concept of religious moderation through the sentence *ummatan washat* contained in surah *al-Baqarah* verse 143. The interpretation of this verse will use the *ma'na cum maghza* approach, which Syahiron Syamsuddin popularized. This research is expected to produce a theory that can be used as a basis for thinking about harmony in society. In addition, this research also contributes to the breadth of Islamic treasures, which indeed have not given birth to new methods of interpretation for a long time.

Research on this matter is unique, but to prove this uniqueness, tracking relevant studies is carried out so that differences or distinctions appear. Several studies examine religious moderation. Still, most focus on classical interpretations and Indonesian interpretations, including

research on religious moderation from the perspective of Al-Qur'an interpretation (Budiono, 2021), interpretation of religious moderation through the interpretations of Al-Misbah and Al -Azhar (Izzan, 2021), religious moderation according to the Qur'an and Hadith (Nurdin, 2021), religious moderation in the interpretation of the Ministry of Religion (T. Rahman, 2022), interpretation of religious moderation according to Hasbi Assiddiqy (Khadrah, 2022), commentary contextual moderation of religion (Ghozali & Rizal, 2021), interpretation of religious moderation in the digital interpretation of Al-Qur'an.id. (Miftahuddin et al., 2020). Based on this variety of research, there are differences in studies that this research will focus on interpretation using the *Ma'na Cum Maghaza* approach, which based on searches, is still very rarely done.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, namely processing existing data by narrating it using words. This type of research combines library research with an interpretation approach. Strictly speaking, this research is only related to electronic and printed literature. In library research utilizing library resources limits its activities only to library materials without the need for field research. The procedure for carrying out this research is, first, collecting research data physically and electronically. Second, read the data that has been actively collected to find the main points needed. Third, make research notes using sticky notes to remember important

things in the data. Fourth, processing the data that has been collected with appropriate analytical techniques. The data sources in this study consist of two, namely primary (the book of Interpretations and the book *Ma'na Cum Magazha*) and secondary books or journals relevant to discussing religious moderation.

The data analysis technique used was content analysis. This technique analyzes data which is research content. The period regarding data is unlimited; this aims to discover the dynamics of content that develops based on the theories studied. (Eriyanto, 2015). While the approach used is the *Ma'na cum Maghza* approach which was popularized by Syahiron Syamsuddin, who is an Indonesian hermeneutic figure. This *ma'na cum maghza* approach is an attempt at interpreting a text; in this case, it is specified as the Qur'an with its historical meaning through the first audience, and then its significance is developed according to contemporary circumstances. (Sahiron Syamsuddin, 2017). This *ma'na cum maghza* approach uses three techniques, namely first, studying the historical context. Second, examine the aspect of language or linguistics. Then the third examines the moral side of what is captured (*maza*).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

As with the *ma'na cum maghza* approach, this discussion will be described based on several approaches, namely normative foundations, historical studies, linguistic studies, and *Maqshad Al-Ayat*. All of this boils down to understanding the concept of *ummatan washaan*, which is the

point of emphasis for discussing religious moderation in this study.

But before that, we will first explain briefly about *ma'na cum maghza*. This term is an approach popularized by Sahiron Syamdudin, an Indonesian hermeneutic figure. *Ma'na cum maghza* results from a concoction of several contemporary commentators' thoughts. In his writings, Sahiron said that this approach simplifies and develops the thoughts of Fazlur Rahman, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, Abdullah Saeed and Muhammad al-Ṭalbi. This can be seen from the use of the term *maghza* which quotes the thoughts of Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd.

Syahiron said *ma'na cum maghza* is an approach in which a *mufassir* investigates the meaning and main messages when the Qur'an was revealed, then develops these main messages for the present context. In simple terms, this approach seeks to dialogue text and context. As we know, the essence of an interpretation is to bridge between 'silent' texts and a reality that continues to grow without limits.

Sahiron Syamsuddin introduced three aspects that must be considered by every *mufassir* who uses his approach. Among them are *al-ma'na al-tarikhiy* (historical meaning), *al-maghza al-tarikhi* (historical phenomenal significance), *al-maghza al-mutaharrik* (dynamic phenomenal significance). These three aspects have an organized stage for uncovering the intended purpose. The following is Sahiron's explanation for

uncovering these three things. (Shahiron Syamsuddin, 2020).

However, it is undeniable that this approach to interpreting the Koran can have its advantages and disadvantages. This is common in scientific discourse, *wa bil* specifically in the field of interpretation, which always experiences development and complexity in its application. However, *ma'na cum maghza* at least helps *mufasssir* to avoid literal understanding and can make a solutive contribution to contemporary problems based on the teachings of the Qur'an. So that the spirit of the Koran as a book of *salih li kulli masa wa eat* can be felt by humans at all times. (Hamdani, 2022).

Normative Foundation

Allah says in Al-Qur'an Surah al-Baqarah verse 143 that:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى
النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا ۗ وَمَا جَعَلْنَا
الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعِ الرَّسُولَ
مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَىٰ عَقْبَيْهِ ۗ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَىٰ
الَّذِينَ هَدَىٰ اللَّهُ ۗ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِيعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ ۗ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

Artinya: *Thus We have appointed you a middle nation, that ye may be witnesses against mankind, and that the messenger may be a witness against you. And We appointed the qiblah which ye formerly observed only that We might know him who followeth the messenger, from him who turneth on his heels. In truth it was a*

hard (test) save for those whom Allah guided. But it was not Allah's purpose that your faith should be in vain, for Allah is Full of Pity, Merciful toward mankind.

From the verse above, what needs to be underlined is the word *ummatan wasathan* or middle people as the topic of this study. This is because it correlates with several things meant by religious moderation. Therefore its meaning needs to be peeled and studied in depth. The interpretation of the Ministry of Religion explains that Muslims are made a just and chosen people because they will witness the actions of people who deviate from the truth both in this world and in the hereafter. (Nuryansah & Haq, 2022).

Historical Studies

The revelation of this verse relates to the event of moving the Qibla. This is based on the narration of Ibn Ishaq, who said, "Ismail bin Khalid told me from Abu Ishaq from al-Barra, he said: In the past, the Messenger of Allah prayed to face the Baitul Maqdis. At that time, he often looked towards the sky, waiting for Allah's commands, so Allah sent down His words: We see your face (Muhammad) often looks up to the sky, so We will turn you to the Qibla you like. So face your face to the Grand Mosque (al-Baqarah verse 144), then a Muslim says: We want to know about the Muslims who died before our Qibla changed and how did our prayers go while still facing the Baitul Maqdis? So Allah sent down His word: and we do not waste your faith ... (al-Baqarah verse 143) But those who lack

intelligence say: What made them leave their Qibla before? So Allah sent down His word: Those who lack understanding will say. (As-Suyuthi, 1987).

The hadith above explains *babul wurud* from verses 144 and 143, which tell about the event of moving the Qibla. Originally the Qibla of Muslims facing Baitul Maqdis moved to Baitul Haram. This event occurred when the Prophet, SAW., had emigrated to Medina. The current social condition of the Medina community is very plural and diverse. So, moving the Qibla raises pros and cons in society, there are some people who panic about the practices of previous people who died before the Qibla shifting event. However, there were also Jews who labeled the Prophet SAW as a person who did not have a stand when moving the Qiblah. They are called stupid people, more precisely, the Jews at that time. Those who were enemies of Islam took advantage of this situation to pit the Muslims against each other at that time. They provoked that the change of Qibla is based on racist motivations. They say that the Prophet SAW determined the Qibla towards Baitul Maqdis to attract the interest of the people of the book. Then the Prophet SAW., was considered desperate, so he turned it towards the Baitul Haram. This clearly created confusion and anxiety among the people who did not yet understand how to act at that time. Their faith is still murky with a fanaticism that is too extreme, or some even still have polytheism. Therefore, in the next verse, it is explained that the purpose of moving the

Qibla is as a test to distinguish between those who are true believers or polytheists. (Syirazi, 2015).

Linguistic Studies

In language, the word *ummatan* means mother, generation, or person (male) with all qualities. Meanwhile, in terminology, *ummah* means a group of people who are generally interconnected in history related to language, religion, economy, and they have the same goals in the faith, politics, and economy of the Arab nation. The word *ummatan* itself has been adapted into Indonesian, meaning adherents or adherents of a religion or the teachings of the Prophet. While the word *wasathan*, which means the middle, or the middle. *Wasath* is also interpreted as mediating between two objects and also means that which is beautiful and noble. Both of them return to the meaning of *wasath* because beauty and nobility exist when there is a balance and distinguishes between what is right and what is wrong. It can be concluded that *ummatan wasathan* means a middle *ummah*. So what is meant by the true *ummatan wasathan*?

Allah has determined the Islamic *Ummah* to be a *wasathan* (middle or moderate) *ummah*. (Nur, 2016). In his commentary, Hamka explained the intention of the middle *ummah*, namely the *ummah* who have the honor to be amid the strict orders of Prophet Musa AS, with the tenderness of Prophet Isa AS. This means followers of a religion that is not too inclined to the world like the Jews, and not

too inclined to pursue only the hereafter. It can be understood that the Islamic Ummah is desired by Allah SWT, as a just, middle, or the best people between the two previous religious extremities namely the Jews who were too "down to earth" and the Christians who were too "heavenly". As for the asbabun nuzul from this verse, it is about the event of moving the Qibla from Baitul Maqdis to Baitul Haram. This caused a split among the Muslims themselves. They split into several different factions. There are those who still follow the Prophet Muhammad, turning back, denying the change of Qibla, and there are also those who still follow the Prophet Muhammad. They—stupid people—will surely think that moving the Qibla is a mistake or that of the Prophet Muhammad, and Muslims are only following their lust. This has made Muslims restless and doubtful, some of them have even returned to their former religion. This has also been predicted by Allah SWT, in Q.S. al-Baqarah about how their response to the event of moving the Qibla. In the midst of this division, Allah SWT made the Muslim Ummah as Ummatan Wasathan a problem solver. The purpose of making it Ummatan Wasathan is to act as a mediator and reference between the many struggles of views and battles of various "isms".

Maqshad Al-Ayat

After some of the things that have been mentioned above, some moral ideas will be obtained from the verses studied. Some things that we can take from the study above are the role of ummatan

wasathan used in the concept of religious moderation. (Quraish, 2002). Moderate in the concept of religion means prioritizing tolerance in differences and understanding all diversity with an open attitude. (Ramadhani, 2021). Moderation is also closely related to tolerance which must be cultivated in it. (Akhmadi, 2019) From the explanation above, it can be understood that the Muslim Ummah in religious moderation should be able to implement a moderate attitude in the midst of problems.

Among the many problems, the Islamic Ummah is expected to be a fair witness by assessing everything from many directions so that an inclusive understanding is achieved. Likewise when living in the midst of a multicultural environment. (Rizky & Zakiah, 2020). The Islamic Ummah should be able to position itself as a just people. For example when there are cultural differences regarding how religious views are in carrying out worship as is the case with the intolerance that occurred in Lampung. As Muslims, we should be able to respect the rights of others to worship according to their respective religious beliefs and avoid acts of violence and even intimidation.

Therefore the expected result of religious moderation is an attitude of tolerance. There are several principles of enforcement in the concept of tolerance. First, humans are creatures that are privileged and glorified by Allah SWT, with reason as a gift. Second, the belief that differences in beliefs is the will of

Allah SWT, then His creatures are given the freedom to make an effort to choose to do or leave. Third, Muslims are not given the task of judging non-believers because of their disbelief. This should be the prerogative of Allah SWT, as the best judge. This is in accordance with Q.S. Al-Hajj verse 69 "... Allah will judge between you on the Day of Judgment about what you used to discriminate against...". Fourth, the Muslim Ummah is expected to be a just people and remain ethical even towards non-believers. Vice versa, Muslims should also hate tyrannical acts and punish the perpetrators even if they are brothers in faith. This is in accordance with Q.S. al-Maidah verse 8 "... never let your hatred of a people encourage you to act unjustly ...". Fifth, Allah SWT does not even want preaching by coercion or violence. Even if a settlement has to be by war, ethics has also been regulated in it, as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad, in treating prisoners of war. The balance of the moderates can also be seen from the side of the balance in the scientific aspect. Muslims should not reject everything that is scientific, nor should they directly accept information in the name of science. Everything needs to be processed through reason that has been bestowed on humans. Actually it was easy for Allah SWT., To create all people the same without any differences so that there is no dispute between humans. But all of that has become His will which has wisdom behind it. Allah SWT., gives freedom for humans to think and analyze with reason

that has been gifted to choose what is right and what makes them happy.

CONCLUSION

Ummatan Wasathan is a paradigm of thinking for Muslims that can be used as a guide in behaving in the midst of differences. Based on historical studies, we can understand that Allah SWT., has given an example of how humans react to a change to slander in it. There are those who turn their backs, refuse, follow without knowing, and some even take advantage of the situation to divide for personal gain. Therefore, Allah Swt., made us as ummatan wasathan as a concept that can become a stronghold in the midst of a war of understanding (ism). Based on linguistic studies, it can be understood that the word Ummatan Wasathan has a meaning which means middle people. Umat has a similar meaning to mother, generation, or people (men). From this it can actually be understood that the ummah has a deep meaning like a sibling relationship that comes from the word mother (Walidah) and also the maturity of thought from an adult man (ar-Rijal) to build quality generations in various fields of life. While Wasath has a middle meaning, beauty, glory. This is mutually correlated that the attitude of being in the middle can cause something beautiful and noble. Ummathan Wasathan is understood as a just people in the midst of the two extremities of the two religions, namely Judaism and Christianity. The Jews at that time were identified as rationalists who put aside the interests of the hereafter,

while the Christians had the opposite tendency. The wisdom that can be taken when Allah SWT., makes the Islamic Ummah a Wasathan Ummatan, that is, humans are given the freedom to make choices with the potential of their minds, the difference is His will which acts as a test, to be fair, open, and to stay away from violence in conveying da'wah or just advice .

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