

# The Story of Iskandar Zulqarnain in the Quran, Surah Al-Kahf Verses 83-93 According to Ahmad

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**Abstract-** The Quran, revered as the holy scripture of Islam, embodies the divine revelations of Allah. It serves as a comprehensive guide for Muslims, encompassing not only theological doctrines, ethical precepts, and ritual practices, but also historical narratives and accounts.

**Keywords-** *Quran, Iskandar Zulqarnain, Al-Kahf Verses*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Quran, revered as the holy scripture of Islam, embodies the divine revelations of Allah. It serves as a comprehensive guide for Muslims, encompassing not only theological doctrines, ethical precepts, and ritual practices, but also historical narratives and accounts.<sup>4</sup>

As affirmed by Allah, the Quranic narratives are veracious and constitute a divine message delivered to Prophet Muhammad, subsequently transmitted to the community. The Quran's veracity is unequivocally established in Surah Al-Maidah (5):48,<sup>5</sup> which states:

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Maraghi was a renowned Egyptian scholar and jurist who made significant contributions to Islamic studies. He is particularly known for his work on the interpretation of the Qur'an and his efforts to modernize Islamic education. Al-Maraghi's legacy continues to be revered by scholars and students of Islam around the world.

<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Quraish Shihab (Arabic: محمد قریش شهاب; *Muhammad Quraysh Shihab*; born 16 February 1944) is an Indonesian Muslim scholar in the sciences of the Qur'an, an author, an Academic Scholar, and former Minister of Religious Affairs in the Fourth Development Cabinet (1998).

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<sup>4</sup> Lutfil Chakim, "Skripsi Kisah-kisah dalam al-Qur'an (Studi penafsiran Muhammad al-Ghazali terhadap Q.S.al-Kahfi dalam Nahwa Tafsir maudu'I li Suwar al-Our'an al-Karim)" Fakultas Ushuluddin, Jurusan Perbandingan Agama, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta 2007), 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> Al-quran Chapter 5, vers: 48.

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيْمِنًا عَلَيْهِ ۖ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ ۗ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ عَمَّا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ ۗ لِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا ۗ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ ۖ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ ۗ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ (48)

Meanings:

We have revealed this Book to you, O Prophet, as the absolute truth, confirming and superseding earlier scriptures. Therefore, judge between them based on Allah's revelations, not personal desires. We have established a distinct law and path for each community. Had Allah willed, He would have unified humanity, but He chose to test you through your diversity. Strive to excel in good deeds. Ultimately, you will return to Allah, who will then clarify your differences.

Qur'anic narratives are often interpreted as historical accounts rather than fictional stories. These narratives are frequently supported by archaeological evidence, lending credence to their historical accuracy.<sup>6</sup> Examples include the stories of various prophets and their communities, such as Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians.

Qur'anic narratives can be categorized into three main types:

1. Stories of the Prophets:

These narratives span a chronological timeline, beginning with Prophet Adam and culminating with Prophet Muhammad, along with other messengers. It's important to note that not every prophet's story is comprehensively detailed in the Qur'an.

The Quranic narrative can be categorized into three primary divisions. The first category encompasses extended narratives, which provide detailed accounts of the lives and experiences of numerous prophets, including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, and Jesus, peace be upon them all.<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, the Quran encompasses narratives of intermediate length. These include the stories of Prophets Hud, Saleh, Lot, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Zachariah, and John, each presented with a balanced degree of detail.

Thirdly, the Quran features concise narratives. These are exemplified by the stories of Prophets Enoch, Elijah, and Elisha, whose accounts are brief yet impactful.<sup>8</sup>

2. Narratives of historical figures and ordinary individuals, excluding prophets, are presented in the Quran. These accounts span from the era of Prophet Adam to the time of Prophet Muhammad, encompassing figures like Zulqarnain, Habil, and Qabil.<sup>9</sup>

3. In addition to pre-Islamic narratives, the Quran recounts events contemporaneous with Prophet Muhammad, including the Hijrah, the Battles of Badr, Uhud, and Hunain, as well as the Isra and Mi'raj.<sup>10</sup>

The Quranic narrative of Zulkarnain, detailed in Surah Al-Kahf verses 83-93, has been a subject of extensive scholarly debate among exegetes and historians. Numerous elements within this account remain

<sup>6</sup> Manna al-Qahtan, *Ulumul al-Qur'an edisi Indonesia: Pengantar Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an*, (Jakarta: Pustaka al-Kautsar, 2005), 390.

<sup>7</sup> Yunahar Ilyas, *Kuliah ulumul Qur'an* (ITQAN Publishing: Jogyakarta 2014), 228.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 228.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 229.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 230.

enigmatic, including the identity of Zulkarnain himself, the precise locations of his global travels, and the veracity of the Gog and Magog legend, along with the iron barrier constructed to contain them.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHOD

This research employs a library-based qualitative methodology. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the study analyzes literary works related to the topic. As Ratna (2008: 47) emphasizes, qualitative research focuses on natural data within its original context. In this case, the primary data is the textual interpretation of Surah Al-Kahf verses 83-93. Several existing books and dissertations with similar themes to this research have been consulted.

1. The Quran
2. Tafsir Al-Maragi. Ahmad Musthafa al-Maragi. Al-Maraghi wrote this tafsir because he realized that the previous tafsir books were compiled in a language style that suited the readers at that time, which was of course very easy for them to understand. Most commentators, when presenting their works, use a concise language style, as well as being proud of being able to write in that way. Then Al-Maragi also discovered the stories of previous people who did not go through a selection process, unlike what the saman people do now.
3. Tafsîr al-Mishbah is an interpretation of the Al-Qur'an by Muhammad Quraish Shihab (ulama from Indonesia). Tafsîr al-Mishbâh provides many 'explanatory explanations' for a number of well-known commentators so that it becomes a competent, informative and argumentative reference. This interpretation is presented in a writing style that is easy for all groups to understand, from academics to the wider community.
4. Dzulqarnain in the Koran, Taufik, Thesis of the Department of Comparative Religion, Faculty of Ushuluddin State Islamic University Sunan Kalijaga, 2009. This thesis tries to discuss the harmony between the story of King Zulkarnain which is told in the Koran with historical facts. This study produces conclusions about two historical figures who are considered as Zulkarnain who are told by the Qur'an by experts. The first was Alexander the Great of Macedon. The second is Cyrus or Kurush or better known as Cyrus the founder of the Persian Empire.

## III. RESULTS

The narratives of Zulqarnain and Gog and Magog within the Quran present intricate enigmas that posed significant challenges to the author's comprehension during the writing of this work. The primary motivation for exploring this theme stems from the author's desire to elucidate the identity of Zulqarnain within the Quranic context.

The Quranic account of Zulqarnain commences with three queries posed to Prophet Muhammad by disbelievers, one of which pertains to the aforementioned figures and their association with Zulqarnain. This query was intended to discredit the Prophet's veracity. However, the narrative serves as a testament to the prophetic authority of Muhammad.<sup>11</sup>

The Quranic narrative of Gog and Magog (Yajuj wa Majuj) appears twice: in Surah al-Kahf (verses 92-98) within the context of Zulqarnain's quest and again in Surah al-Naba (verses 96-97) as a prophetic account of future events.<sup>12</sup>

The figure of Zulqarnain, a divinely empowered king, is central to the Gog and Magog narrative. Endowed with resources, military might, and wisdom by Allah, Zulqarnain's global expeditions aimed to

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<sup>11</sup> Badri Yatim, *Sejarah Peradaban Islam Dirrasah Islamivah II*, (Jakarta, PT. Raja Grafindo Persada, 2007), 13-19.

<sup>12</sup> Taufik, "Skripsi Zulqarnain Dalam al-Quran", (Fakultas Ushuluddin, Jurusan Perbandingan Agama, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta 2007), 3-4.

establish justice, safeguard the vulnerable, punish the wicked, support the faithful, and ultimately protect humanity from the threat posed by Gog and Magog.<sup>13</sup>

Some Quranic exegetes characterize Gog and Magog as destructive entities encountered by Zulqarnain during his travels. This paper will primarily concentrate on the narrative of Zulqarnain, particularly his quest to locate Gog and Magog. The focus is on the historical plausibility of the Gog and Magog story as it unfolds from Zulqarnain's journey, as presented in Quranic verses 18:83-93.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

##### A. Zulqarnain's expedition encountered the tribes of Gog and Magog, perceived as harbingers of destruction.

Before delving into Zulqarnain's journey to confront Gog and Magog, it is essential to establish the identity of Zulqarnain within the Quranic narrative. The account unfolds as follows:

###### 1. The Figure of Zulqarnain: An Etymological and Terminological Exploration.

Etymologically, the term "Zulqarnain" is derived from the root "Zu," signifying possession, and "qarnain," meaning two horns. Conceptually, it refers to an individual possessing dominion over both the Eastern and Western regions.<sup>14</sup>

There exists a diversity of perspectives concerning the identity of Zulqarnain. Some scholars interpret Zulqarnain literally as "the two-horned man" or a monarch adorned with two horns.<sup>15</sup> Others equate Zulqarnain with Alexander the Great, the Macedonian conqueror. A third group proposes that Zulqarnain corresponds to Akhton, a Hyksos king who governed Egypt for two centuries. Finally, a fourth viewpoint identifies Zulqarnain with Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire, renowned for his emblematic two horns.<sup>16</sup>

###### A) The account of Zulqarnain and his confrontation with Gog and Magog.

The narrative of Zulqarnain initiates with interrogations directed at Muhammad by the Quraysh infidels regarding a journeyman and the rampart he erected to protect a populace from the onslaught of Gog and Magog, as elucidated in verses 83 and 84 of Surah Al-Kahf.

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ ذِي الْقُرْنَيْنِ ۖ قُلْ سَأَتْلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا ۗ ﴿١٨:٨٣﴾ إِنَّا مَكَّنَّا لَهُ ۙ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَآتَيْنَاهُ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ سَبَبًا ۖ ﴿١٨:٨٤﴾

Meanings:

(18:83) (O Muhammad), they ask you about Dhu al-Qarnayn. Say: "I will give you an account of him." (18:84) We granted him power in the land and endowed him with all kinds of resources.

The words "Wa yas'alunaka 'an zi al-qarnain, Qul sa'atlu 'alaikum minhu zikra, wa atainahu min kulli syai insababà, Inna makkanna Lahu ft al-Ardhi wa atainahu min kulli Sya'in sababa Questions of the Kafirs of Mecca and the Jews Yathrib to the Messenger of Allah about someone who circled the earth, a question to prove the falsehood of the Prophet Muhammad. They were the Kafirs of Mecca and the Jews. Yathrib sent the Quraish leaders Nadhr Ibn al-Harits and Ugbah bin Abi Muith to come to the Jewish priests in Medina, to ask about the truth. Prophet Muhammad and his characteristics.<sup>17</sup>

The Quranic term "zikr" in verse 83, though etymologically signifying a warning or lesson, is contextually employed to denote a narrative. This interpretation underscores the instructive and cautionary nature of the story presented within the Quranic text.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Fachruddin HS, *Ensiklopedia al-Quran* (Jakarta: Rineeka Cipta, 1992), 644.

<sup>14</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah pesan Kesan dan keserasian Al-Qur'an*, vol. 7 (Lentera Hati, Jakarta 2002), 361-362.

<sup>15</sup> Taufik, Skripsi Skripsi Dzulqarnain dalam Al-Our'an (Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2009), 71.

<sup>16</sup> Taufik, Skripsi Dzulqarnain dalam Al-Qur'an (Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2009), 39-63.

<sup>17</sup> Abù al-Fida' Isma'il ibn 'Umar ibn Kasir, *Mukhtasar Tafsir Ibnu Kasir juz. 3* (Madinah: Daru al-Sabuni), 100.

<sup>18</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah pesan Kesan dan keserasian Al-Qur'an*, vol. 7 (Lentera Hati, Jakarta 2002), 364-365.

The identity of the historical figure known as Zulqarnain has been a subject of scholarly debate. Some scholars propose that Zulqarnain corresponds to Alexander the Great, while others suggest he may be associated with Akhenaten.

The Quranic narrative portrays Zulqarnain as a righteous ruler endowed with immense power and authority, whose dominion extended to the east and west. He possessed a multitude of virtues, including wisdom, strong moral character, and access to abundant resources. These resources encompassed military forces and weaponry, placing him at the pinnacle of temporal power. Despite his exalted position, Zulqarnain remained steadfast in his faith, demonstrating unwavering obedience and loyalty to God.

Then Allah gave Dzulqarnain a way with his knowledge to achieve what he desired. The origin of the meaning of as-sabab is al-habl tali. This word is expressed for everything with which something else can be achieved.<sup>19</sup>

Zulqarnain, a sobriquet signifying a someone of two powers, achieved dominion over both the East and West. His mastery over the Earth's hemispheres was facilitated by his erudition. Allah granted him unhindered access and dominion across vast territories, encompassing both the Eastern and Western regions of the globe.<sup>20</sup>

Allah bestowed upon Dzulqarnain comprehensive dominion, including a substantial army, weaponry, and fortified strongholds. This empowerment enabled Dzulqarnain to subjugate both the Eastern and Western hemispheres, along with their respective nations and rulers. Essentially, Allah provided Dzulqarnain with the resources and authority necessary to fulfill his divinely ordained mission.<sup>21</sup> Verily, God has bestowed upon him dominion over the earth, and God has facilitated for him the attainment of all endeavors.

#### A. The encounter between Zulqarnain and Gog and Magog.

Subsequently, in verse 85 of Surah Al-Kahf, the phrase "Fa atbaba sababà" implies that Zulqarnain pursued one of the numerous paths granted to him. Allah, through divine knowledge, facilitated Zulqarnain's circumnavigation of the earth by providing him with multiple avenues to explore.<sup>22</sup>

Zulqarnain circumnavigated the globe with extensive knowledge, a substantial military force, and advanced weaponry. Divine intervention facilitated his conquest of numerous nations and subjugation of their rulers. This extraordinary empowerment bestowed upon Zulqarnain was a unique and unparalleled divine blessing.<sup>23</sup> The order of travel is as follows:

##### a) The First Expedition

The initial expedition of Zulqarnain is detailed in verses 85-88 of Surah Al-Kahf

فَأَتْبَعَ سَبَبًا ﴿18:85﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ مَغْرِبَ الشَّمْسِ وَجَدَهَا تَغْرُبُ فِي عَيْنٍ حَمِئَةٍ وَوَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا قَوْمًا ۗ قُلْنَا يَا الْقَارِئِينَ إِنَّمَا أَنْتُمْ تُعَذِّبُونَ وَإِنَّمَا أَنْتُمْ تُنذِرُونَ فِيهِمْ حُسْنًا ﴿18:86﴾ قَالَ أَمَا مَنْ ظَلَمَ فَسَوْفَ نُعَذِّبُهُ ثُمَّ يُرَدُّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ ۖ فَيُعَذِّبُهُ عَذَابًا نُكْرًا ﴿18:87﴾ وَأَمَا مَنْ آمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُ جَزَاءٌ الْحَسَنَىٰ ۖ وَسَنُقُولُ لَهُ ۖ مِنْ أَمْرِنَا يُسْرًا ۗ ﴿18:88﴾<sup>24</sup>

Meanings:

He set out (westwards) on an expedition, (18:86) until when he reached the very limits where the sun sets, he saw it setting in dark turbid waters; and nearby he met a people. We said: "O Dhu al-Qarnayn, you have the power to punish or to treat them with kindness." (18:87) He said: "We will chastise him who does wrong, whereafter he will be returned to his Lord and He will chastise him grievously. (18:88) But as for

<sup>19</sup> Syaikh Imam Al-Qurthubi, *Al-Jami' Li Ahkâm Al-Qur'an*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Azzam, 2009), 120-128.

<sup>20</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002), 112-116.

<sup>21</sup> Syaikh Abu Bakar Jabir Al-Jazairi, *Tafsir al-Qur'an Al-Aisar* vol 4 (Darus sunnah: Jakarta 2010), 477.

<sup>22</sup> Li Imamu Al-Jalil Al-Alâmah Abi Al-Bakrkat Abdullah Ibn Ahmad Ibn Mahmud Al-Nasafi 'Alaihi Sihaibu Al-Rahmah Wa Al-Ridwan, *Tafsir Al-Nasafi*, juz 2 (Dar Al-Haya' Al-Kitabu Al-Ârabiyyah: ), 23.

<sup>23</sup> Abû al-Fida' Ismâ'il ibn 'Umar ibn Katsir, *Mukhtasar Tafsir Ibnu Kasir*, juz. 3 (Madinah: Dâr al-Sabûni), 100-101.

<sup>24</sup> Rukimin, Thesis, 146.

him who believes and acts righteously, his will be a goodly reward and we shall enjoin upon him only mild commands."

The term "Sababà" has been interpreted differently by scholars and historians. Some define it as a halting point or station, while others propose it signifies a road or pathway.

As described, Ibn 'Abbas suggested that "Sababà" refers to a path taken, emphasizing its function as a stopping point. Mujahid, on the other hand, characterized it as a location situated between the eastern and western regions, identified by following a route marked by specific signs or indicators associated with the halting place.<sup>25</sup>

M. Quraish Shihab, interprets the word "Sabab" as a rope, which was developed into "Something that includes everything that can lead him to achieve what he wants." M. Quraish Shihab thinks "Sababa" here is something that took Zulqarnain to the area he was going to.<sup>26</sup>

According to M. Quraish Shihab, the term "Magriba al-Syams" should not be interpreted literally as the geographical locations of the sun's setting and rising points. Essentially, there is no specific location where the sun rises or sets. Interpreting these terms based on ancient beliefs would imply that the Qur'an affirms misconceptions. The phenomenon of the sun appearing to set behind mountains, oceans, or deserts in certain places is merely an observational illusion.<sup>27</sup>

In his exegesis, Muhammad Musthafa Al-Maragi interprets the term "Sabab" as another route. After taking this alternate route and reaching a western region, he found no further lands. There were no buildings or trees, only a sea of darkness, where it appeared as though the sun was setting.<sup>28</sup>

In a region characterized by a deep, murky hue reminiscent of a mixture of mud and water, Zulqarnain encountered a populace steeped in disbelief. He subsequently guided them towards monotheism, compelling them to worship Allah and forsake idolatry. Those who persisted in polytheism were met with capital punishment by Zulqarnain, following which their souls were returned to Allah for ultimate retribution in the afterlife.<sup>29</sup>

Those who engage in the worship of Allah and perform righteous actions in this world will be granted an optimal reward, commensurate with their deeds. Moreover, they will be bestowed with divine knowledge in this life, fostering a deeper connection with God, purifying their hearts, and facilitating the performance of virtuous acts, such as prayer, zakat, and jihad.<sup>30</sup>

Zulqarnain exhorted his people to worship Allah alone and warned of divine punishment for those who disobeyed. He emphasized that while he would impose earthly retribution upon the disbelievers, the ultimate judgment and recompense would be from Allah. Conversely, those who embraced Allah's guidance, performed righteous deeds, and demonstrated benevolence towards themselves and others would be rewarded by Allah in the hereafter.<sup>31</sup>

Subsequently, Zulqarnain encountered a community situated at the ocean's extremity. The Quranic passage explicitly states the absence of a city in this location, implying the possibility of these individuals having migrated inland.<sup>32</sup>

## b) Second Expedition

Having traversed westward on his initial expedition, he subsequently embarked on a journey eastward, as detailed in verses 89-92 of Surah Al-Kahf.

<sup>25</sup> Abú al-Fida' Isma'il ibn 'Umar ibn Kasir, *Mukhtasar Tafsir Ibnu Kasir*, juz. 3 (Madinah: Dār al-Sabūni), 100-101.

<sup>26</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir al-Misbah*, vol. 7 (Jakarta, Lentera Hati, 2006)

<sup>27</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Misbah*, vol 7 (Jakarta, Lentera Hati, 2006), 366-367.

<sup>28</sup> Ahmad Musthafa al-Maragi, *Tafsir Al-Maragi*, Juz XVI (Mesir: Mustafa Al-Bab Al-Halabi 1974 M), 23.

<sup>29</sup> Ahmad Musthafa al-Maragi, *Tafsir Al-Maragi*, Juz XVI (Mesir: Mustafa Al-Bab Al-Halabi 1974 M), 24.

<sup>30</sup> Ahmad Musthafa al-Maragi, *Tafsir Al-Maragi*, Juz XVI (Mesir: Mustafa Al-Bab Al-Halabi 1974 M), 24.

<sup>31</sup> Buya Hamka, *Tafsir Al-Azhar* Juz XV (jakarta; pustaka Panji Mas), 252.

<sup>32</sup> Al-Qurthubi, *Al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an* terj, Amir Hamzah (Jakarta: Pustaka Azam. 2008).

ثُمَّ اتَّبَعَ سَبَبًا ﴿18:89﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ مَطْلِعَ الشَّمْسِ وَجَدَهَا تَطَّلُعُ عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ لَّمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُم مِّن دُونِهَا سِتْرًا ۚ ﴿18:90﴾ كَذٰلِكَ ۗ وَقَدْ أَحَطْنَا بِمَا لَدَيْهِ خُبْرًا ﴿18:91﴾

Meanings:

(18:89) Then he set out on another expedition (18:90) until he reached the limit where the sun rises and he found it rising on a people whom We had provided no shelter from it. (18:91) Thus was the state of those people, and We encompassed in knowledge all concerning Dhu al- Qarnayn.

Having completed his westward journey, Zulqarnain then proceeded eastward. Scholars offer diverse interpretations of this eastern expedition.

According to al-Maragi, Zulqarnain continued his journey from the western terminus until reaching the sunrise in the east. Here, he encountered a people devoid of any architectural structures, trees for shade, or protective roofs or mountains against the scorching sun.<sup>33</sup>

The topography of their land renders construction of permanent dwellings impossible. These creatures exhibit a diurnal pattern, seeking refuge in aquatic environments during daylight hours and emerging primarily at dawn and dusk. Their sustenance activities are restricted to nocturnal periods, contrasting sharply with human behavior. Furthermore, they lack any form of clothing or body covering.<sup>34</sup>

Consistent with our earlier account, Zulqarnain journeyed to the Earth's eastern and western boundaries, engaging in virtuous endeavors. He ascended to a position of unparalleled authority and a vast realm, a distinction granted to a select few. This is a truth known only to Allah.<sup>35</sup>

According to M. Quraish Shiab, Zulqarnain embarked on a formidable journey from west to east, culminating at the point of sunrise. There, he encountered a people devoid of any protection from the sun's rays. Shiab posits that Zulqarnain's expeditions, both eastward and westward, were guided by knowledge and principle. Furthermore, the interpreter asserts that our understanding encompasses the entirety of Zulqarnain's being, both physically and intellectually.<sup>36</sup>

Upon reaching the sunset point, Zulqarnain continued his journey eastward. This is consistent with astronomical principles, as the sun invariably rises in the east. Scholars concur that the 'place of sunrise' mentioned in the text refers to an eastern region, potentially a lake.<sup>37</sup>

c) Third Journey

ثُمَّ اتَّبَعَ سَبَبًا ﴿18:92﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ بَيْنَ السَّدَّيْنِ وَجَدَ مِنْ دُونِهِمَا قَوْمًا ۚ لَا يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ قَوْلًا ﴿18:93﴾

Meanings:

18:92) Then he set out on another expedition (18:93) until when he reached a place between the two mountains, he found beside the mountains a people who scarcely understood anything.

Until you meet two mountains side by side. Two mountains are very high and no one can climb over them, between the two mountains there is a gap that Gog and Magog used to get to the land of Al-Turk.<sup>38</sup>

Then, between the two mountains, he encountered a people with limited cognitive capacity, incapable of comprehending abstract concepts or standard linguistic structures. It is postulated that their intellectual deficiency hindered their ability to derive meaning from contextual cues and nonverbal communication.<sup>39</sup> Due to linguistic barriers or limited cognitive capacity.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Ahmad Mustafa al-Maragi, *Tafsir Al-Maragi*, Juz XVI (Mesir: Mustafa Al-Bab Al-Halabi 1974 M), 24.

<sup>34</sup> Ahmad Mustafa al-Maragi, *Tafsir Al-Maragi*, Juz XVI (Mesir: Mustafa Al-Bab Al-Halabi 1974 M), 24-25.

<sup>35</sup> Ahmad Musthafa al-Maragi, *Tafsir Al-Maragi* Juz XVIMesir: Mustafa Al-Bab Al-Halabi 1974 M), 25-26.

<sup>36</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002),

<sup>37</sup> Shafiyyurrahman al-Mubarakfuri, *Shahih Ibnu Kasir*. (Bogor, Pustaka Ibnu Kasir, 2006), 592-593.

<sup>38</sup> Shafiyyurrahman, *Shahih Tafsir Ibnu Kasir* (Bogor, Pustaka Ibnu Kasir, 2006), 592-593.

<sup>39</sup> Ahmad Musthafa al-Maragi, *Tafsir Al-Maragi*, Juz XVI (Mesir: Mustafa Al-Bab Al-Halabi 1974 M), 25-26.

<sup>40</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002), 121-122.

### 3. Zulkarnain along with Gog and Ma'jud

﴿18:93﴾ قَالُوا يٰذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ اِنَّ يٰاُجُوْجَ وَمَآجُوْجَ مُفْسِدُوْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ فَهَلْ نَجْعَلُ لَكَ حَرْجًا عَلٰى اَنْ تَجْعَلَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَهُمْ سَدًّا ﴿18:94﴾ قَالَ مَا مَكَّنِّىْ فِيْهِ رَبِّىْ خَيْرٌ فَاَعِيْنُوْنِىْ بِقُوَّةٍ اَجْعَلْ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ رَدْمًا ۝

Meaning:

(18:93) until when he reached a place between the two mountains, he found beside the mountains a people who scarcely understood anything. (18:94) They said: "O Dhu al-Qarnayn, Gog and Magog are spreading corruption in this land. So shall we pay you taxes on the understanding that you will set up a barrier between us and them?"

"Indeed, Gog and Magog are a source of corruption on Earth. There is disagreement regarding the identity of Gog and Magog, as well as the precise meaning of 'mufsiduna fi al-ard' (corrupters on Earth)."<sup>41</sup>

M. Quraish Shihab interprets the term "Radm" as a strong fortress and barrier, constructed from large pieces of iron mixed with copper. This structure is located between two mountains, formed by pouring the iron and copper from one mountain side to the other. When the two sides were close together, hot iron and copper were placed between them, raising the barrier to the height of the mountains. This process made the structure sturdier and stronger than originally requested.<sup>42</sup>

Al-Maragi proposed that the biblical figures Gog and Magog correspond to the historical Tartars and Mongols, respectively. He attributed their common ancestry to a progenitor named Turk, situating their homeland in North Asia. This region, according to Al-Maragi, stretches from Tibet and China in the east to the Caspian Sea in the west, encompassing Turkestan. He further asserted their lineage tracing back to Prophet Adam.<sup>43</sup>

This group is characterized by a nomadic lifestyle and a propensity for violence. They engage in destructive raids, aiming to subjugate both their own country and neighboring territories. Their tactics include murder, widespread destruction, and the seizure of resources, often launching attacks from fortified positions in mountainous regions.<sup>44</sup>

Subsequently, Zulkarnain constructed a barrier to safeguard the populace inhabiting the intermountain region from potential incursions by Gog and Magog. Zulkarnain declined to accept tribute from these inhabitants. Subsequently, Zulkarnain queried: "Is it equitable for you to provide me with material wealth when the provisions bestowed upon me by Allah surpass your own?" (An-Naml, 27:36)."<sup>45</sup>

Zulkarnain continued, "However, please assist me with the resources to build a strong wall. I will construct a formidable barrier between you and Gog and Magog, stronger than anything you can imagine." He instructed, "Bring me iron bars. When the iron on both sides of the mountain reaches equal height, use a powerful blower to heat large stones placed between the mountain edges. Once red-hot, pour molten iron to fill the gaps, creating a solid and impenetrable barrier." Zulkarnain declared, "This wall is a divine blessing and mercy, acting as a shield protecting you from Gog and Magog's destructive presence."<sup>46</sup>

According to Al-Maragi's exegesis, the term "Radm" refers to a formidable fortification situated near Babul-abwab or Durband, at the foot of Mount Qauqaf, which is attributed to Zulkarnain. This structure, positioned behind the Jejon Balach mountain range and identified as Babul-Hadid, is located in proximity to Tirmiz in the Timurid Empire. Historical and geographical evidence suggests that this wall, constructed in the early 15th century, is synonymous with Babul-Hadith, a passage connecting Samran and India.<sup>47</sup>

The Prophet PBUH said: "Wailu li al'arabi min syarri godiqtaroba" "woe to the Arab nation, from evil that is truly approaching."

<sup>41</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir al-Misbah* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002), 122.

<sup>42</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir al-Misbah*, vol. 8 (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002), 124-126.

<sup>43</sup> Ahmad Musthafa al-Maragi, *Tafsir Al-Maragi*, Juz XVI (Mesir: Mustafa Al-Bab Al-Halabi 1974 M), 24-25.

<sup>44</sup> Ahmad Musthafa al-Maragi, *Tafsir Al-Maragi*, Juz XVI (Mesir: Mustafa Al-Bab Al-Halabi 1974 M), 25-26.

<sup>45</sup> Kemenag RI, *Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahnya*, (Jakarta, Sinergi Pustaka Indonesia, 2012)

<sup>46</sup> Ahmad Musthafa al-Maragi, *Tafsir Al-Maragi*, Juz XVI (Mesir: Mustafa Al-Bab Al-Halabi 1974 M), 20.

<sup>47</sup> Ahmad Musthafa al-Maragi, *Tafsir Al-Maragi*, Juz XVIMesir: Mustafa Al-Bab A1-Halabi 1974 M), 21.



The Mongol and Tartar invasions led to the demise of the Abbasid Caliphate with the death of Caliph Mutasim, marking the end of the unified Arab Islamic empire. The Caliphate was reduced to a nominal authority based in Egypt. Following this period, the Islamic world fragmented into various political entities, with no single power capable of unifying the Muslim lands. Despite these political divisions, the Islamic faith continued to be the predominant religion in regions such as India, China, and much of Asia, passed down through generations from their ancestors.<sup>48</sup>

## V. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion and analysis of the research subject, namely the story of Dzulqarnain in the interpretation of the Qur'an Surah Al-Kahf 18:83-93 according to M. Quraish Shihab and Al-Maragi, as well as addressing the research questions posed, the following conclusions are drawn:

The story of Dzulqarnain and Yajuj wa Ma'juz originates from questions posed by the infidels of Mecca, aimed at discrediting Muhammad's prophethood. Dzulqarnain was a king who controlled the East and West, possibly identified as Al-Akhtun, or Amenhotep IV, a ruler who governed several regions, united people under the worship of Allah, and called his subjects to worship Allah.

Dzulqarnain embarked on a journey from East to West, reaching the place where the sun sets and encountered a group of people. He then continued his journey from the West to the East, reaching the place where the sun rises and found a community whose way of life differed significantly from the norm. These people conducted their activities at night and hid during the day. On his third journey, Dzulqarnain encountered a group of people who did not understand speech, possibly communicating through signs. These people sought Dzulqarnain's help to protect them from the attacks of Ya'juz wa Ma'juz.

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<sup>48</sup> Ahmad Musthafa al-Maragi, *Tafsir Al-Maragi*, Juz XVI (Mesir: Mustafa Al-Bab Al-Halabi 1974 M), 22.