The Meaning Of Qawm In The Qur'an: A Semantic Analysis Based On Thoshihiko Izutsu's Approach

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Abstract

Qawm is one of the terms used in the Qur'an to refer to a group of people. Using a qualitative study with an analytical descriptive approach based on library research, this study explored the meaning of the word qawm in the Qur'an through the semantic approach of Toshihiko Izutsu. The aimed of this study was to uncover the true meaning of qawm and formulate a final conclusion regarding the weltanschauung or worldview associated with the term. The semantic analysis based on Izutsu's method involves several steps: identifying the key term, determining its basic and relational meanings, revealing its historical development, and finally describing the weltanschauung of qawm in the Qur'anic context. The findings showed that in the Qur'an, qawm does not merely signify a group based on ethnicity or culture, but rather a community evaluated through their attitude toward divine teachings. The term encompasses both men and women who live together as a group. The Qur'an classifies qawm into two categories: positive characters—those who believe in and obey Allah; and negative characters —those who reject His teachings and ultimately face destruction. This view indicated that the Qur'an does not judge people based on their origins, but on their faith and moral character. Thus, the concept of qawm reflects the Qur'anic worldview that highlights the importance of spiritual and ethical values in shaping both individual and collective identity.

Keywords: Qawm, Semantics, Toshihiko Izutsu

Abstrak

Qawm merupakan salah satu term yang digunakan al-Qur'an untuk menunjuk kelompok manusia. Dengan menggunakan jenis studi kualitatif yang berfokus pada deskripsi analitis dengan dasar studi pustaka, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi pemaknaan kata qawm dalam al-Qur'an dengan pendekatan semantik Toshihiko Izutsu yang bertujuan untuk menguak makna qawm sebenarnya dalam al-Qur'an. Langkah yang ditempuh dalam analisis semantik Izutsu ini dimulai dengan menentukan kata fokus, menemukan makna dasar dan makna relasional, mengungkapkan kesejarahan makna, dan terakhir mendeskripsikan konsep weltanschauung qawm dalam al-Qur'an. Penelitian ini menemukan hasil bahwa di dalam al-Qur'an, qawm tidak hanya berarti kelompok berdasarkan suku atau budaya, tetapi lebih pada komunitas yang dinilai dari sikap mereka terhadap ajaran Tuhan. Istilah qawm mencakup laki-laki dan perempuan yang hidup bersama dalam satu kelompok. Al-Qur'an membagi qawm menjadi dua kategori: yang positif, yaitu orang-orang beriman dan taat kepada Allah; dan yang negatif, yaitu mereka yang menolak ajaran Allah dan akhirnya binasa. Pandangan ini menunjukkan bahwa al-Qur'an menilai manusia bukan dari asal-usulnya, tetapi dari iman dan akhlaknya. Karena itu, konsep qawm menggambarkan pandangan al-Qur'an yang menekankan pentingnya nilai spiritual dan moral dalam membentuk jati diri manusia, baik secara pribadi maupun kelompok.

Kata kunci: Qawm, Semantik, Toshihiko Izutsu
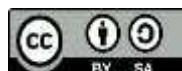
A. INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an, revealed in the Arabic language, possesses a unique linguistic style not found in other scriptures, (Rifani, 2019: 49) Each Qur'anic word carries profound and expansive meaning, which cannot be sufficiently understood through denotation alone but requires deeper exploration of its connotations.(Malia & Atmi, 2023: 165) One such term is *qawm* (in Arabic it is called *qawm*, the letters qāf, wāw, and mīm), commonly translated as "people" or "community".

Qawm is another designation for a group of people or society—a number of individuals united by ties or relationships formed in the region where they reside.(Anwar, 2018: 125) The Qur'an uses this term to refer to a group of individuals, both men and women.(Al-Ashfahani, 2017: 262) In general Arabic usage, the word qawm generally conveys the sense of a "people" or "community".(Kafrawi, 2021: 39).

The term qawm appears frequently in the Qur'an in diverse semantic contexts. In some verses, the word *qawm* denotes particular historical or cultural communities, such as the people of Moses, Noah, or Lot. In other verses, it is used to describe moral characteristics of a community, such as *qawm dhālim* (an unjust people), *qawm muttaqīn* (a God-conscious people), or *qawm kāfir* (a disbelieving people). The diversity of these usages demonstrates that the meaning of *qawm* is not static, but rather contextual and layered.

In order to uncover the true meaning of qawm in the Qur'an, this study employed Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic method. Since Izutsu's semantic analysis is a linguistic approach that focuses on the study of word meanings within a particular semantic system, this research adopted his framework. The process began by determining the semantic theme under study and selecting key vocabulary items from the Qur'an. The meanings of these key words were then analyzed in terms of their basic and relational aspects, followed by an examination of their historical development. Finally, the analysis was synthesized into a worldview (Weltanschauung) of the concept.(Hami, 2021: 153-154) Then, what was the exactly meaning of the term *qawm* in the Quran? To answer this question, further research on this word is necessary. This article aims to analyze the meaning of *qawm* in the Qur'an using Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic approach, in order to understand the use of the term in various contexts.

To the best of the authors' knowledge, few studies have specifically analyzed the word *qawm* using Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic approach. Most traditional tafsīr studies tend to treat qawm lexically as "a people" or "a group," without tracing its semantic relations within the Qur'anic conceptual network. Izutsu's semantic method, however, opens space for a deeper understanding by mapping the semantic relations between *qawm* and other lexical items in the Qur'anic field. Until now, there has been little research applying Izutsu's approach specifically to *qawm*, even though understanding this concept is important for articulating the Qur'anic view of society, collective identity, and social values. Therefore, it is necessary to identify how the term *qawm* is formed, positioned, and interpreted within the Qur'anic semantic field. Such a study would not only enrich the literature on conceptual tafsīr but also contribute to the development of thematic and contextually relevant exegesis for contemporary Muslim societies.

Research employing Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic approach has indeed been carried out on many topics. For example, Fatum Abubakar's entitled *"Concept of Ummah in the Qur'an (Analysis Semantics of Toshihiko Izutsu)",* examined the concept of ummah through Izutsu's framework. (Abubakar, 2020) Unlike the present study, which focused on the term *qawm*—a term often comparable to ummah—this paper applied Izutsu's method specifically to *qawm*. Sahkholid Nasution's article entitled, *" Makna Kata Ummah dalam Al-Qur'an (Kajian Semantik-Sintaksis)",* addressed ummah with a semantic approach but concentrates primarily on syntactic analysis.(Nasution, 2018) In contrast, the present study traced the meaning of *qawm* using Izutsu's semantic method in its entirety. Other previous studies related to the word *qawm* included Asrar Mabrur Faza's entitled, *"Al-Ummah dan Al-Qawm dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an",* which discussed the concepts of al-Ummah and al-Qawm and their similarities and differences.(Faza, 2018) Meanwhile, in this study, the author examines the meaning of the word *qawm* using Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic approach; and Raja Lottung Siregar's in his study *"Konsep Tentang Masyarakat (Ummah, Sya'b, Qawm, dan Qabilah"),* which analyzed Qur'anic vocabulary for *"society" (ummah, sha'b, qawm, and qabīlah)* and the Qur'anic concept of society along with its pedagogical values.(Siregar, 2016) The distinction of the present research was its exclusive focus on the single lexeme qawm, examined comprehensively through Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic framework.

B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodological framework adopted in this study was qualitative research grounded in library research, presented through descriptive analytical writing (Syamsuddin, 2019: 140) The research employed the thematic (mawḍū'ī) method, which refers to the collection and interpretation of Qur'anic verses organized around a specific theme—in this case, the term *qawm* (Fauzan, Mustofa, & Masruchin, 2020: 200) All relevant verses were gathered and examined in order to provide a comprehensive analysis.(Ramadhan, Saputra, & Oki, 2020: 45)

The data collection technique involved tracing all Qur'anic verses containing the term qawm. This was accomplished with the aid of *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li al-Fāẓ al-Qur'ān*, using the Qur'an itself as the primary text to be analyzed. Each occurrence of the word was recorded along with its immediate textual context. In addition, Toshihiko Izutsu's works were used as primary references for understanding the semantic theory applied in this study. To complement these sources, the research also utilized a range of secondary materials including classical and modern Qur'anic commentaries (tafsīr), Arabic dictionaries, scholarly books, academic articles, and relevant digital documents pertaining to Qur'anic linguistics and semantic theory.

Subsequently, the data analysis was carried out by following the stages of Izutsu's semantic theory, applying Toshihiko Izutsu's perspective on semantics to the term qawm. This involved tracing the meaning of qawm within the context of its Qur'anic verses, analyzing its semantic relations with other concepts of similar or opposite meaning, identifying its historical dimensions and semantic development, and constructing a comprehensive understanding of the concept of qawm within the framework of Qur'anic values and thought. In this way, conclusions regarding the meaning of qawm in the Qur'an could be drawn from the perspective of Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic theory.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. *Qawm* in General

Qawm refers to a group of individuals connected by a bond or unity formed within a specific locality. The term designates a collective that assumes responsibility for certain affairs, or that fulfills a distinct and well-defined role within a particular place,

encompassing both men and women.(Anwar, 2018: 125) In this sense, *qawm*, or *kaum*, is another designation for a group of people or a community.

In linguistic literature, there is no precise explanation regarding the minimum number of individuals required to constitute a *qawm*. However, based on its usage, the term generally denotes a large group, such as an ethnic community or a society inhabiting a given area, and in certain contexts, it may even refer to a nation.(Anwar, 2018: 126) Al-Qur'an menggunakan term ini untuk menyebut kelompok atau komunitas yang lebih terfokus dan spesifik.(Hitami, 2009: 45) Etymologically, *qawm* derives from *qiyām*, meaning "to stand or to rise."(Shihab, 1996: 331)

2. Derivation of the Word *Qawm* in the Qur'an

The Qur'an frequently mentions the word *qawm*. In total, the singular form *qawm* (قوم) appears 383 times. It occurs more frequently and earlier than other terms that also denote a collective of people or a community, such as *ummah*.(Anwar, 2018: 126) Various derivational forms of *qawm* found in the Qur'an include: الْقَوْم (206 times), يُقَوِّم (47 times), قَوَّمَا (40 times), قَوْمَكَ (11 times), لِقَوْمِكُمَا (1 time), قَوْمَنَا (4 times), قَوْمُهُ (56 times), قَوْمَهَا (2 times), قَوْمِهِمْ (9 times), قَوْمُهُمَا (2 times), and قَوْمِي (5 times).(Baqi, 2018: 682-687) For the purpose of this study, the author would take several verses to be used as examples in the discussion, the author will classify the context of the verses that are related to the words Allah, Faith, good and bad characters and the names of the Prophets and messengers.

3. Toshihiko Izuts's Semantic

Scholars from various disciplines have developed diverse methods and approaches to uncover the semantic dimensions of the Qur'an. Applying a particular approach requires rigorous scholarly standards in order to avoid excessive interpretive freedom and to prevent public misunderstanding of the Qur'anic text.(Fitri, Hakiki, & Hendro, 2023: 192) Among those who explored the Qur'an in this manner was Toshihiko Izutsu, whose proficiency in multiple international languages enabled him to master Arabic and conduct in-depth Qur'anic studies.(Suwarno, et al., 2022: 176)

Several books addressing Islam as well as other religions have been authored by Toshihiko Izutsu, an Honorary Professor at Keio University, Japan.(Muhsinin, 2021: 47) Izutsu was a scholar who consistently applied the semantic approach in Qur'anic studies.(Fahimah, 2020: 115) Although he acknowledged that the Qur'an can undoubtedly be examined through various other scientific methodologies, he preferred employing a linguistic approach—particularly semantics—when studying Islam.(Lubab & Dimyati, 2017: 101) In his work *God and Man in the Qur'an*, Izutsu explained that semantics is an etymological discipline concerned with examining meaning in its diverse contexts. According to him, the majority of meaningful phenomena can serve as objects of semantic analysis.(Izutsu, 1997: 2) He therefore concluded that semantics constitutes an analytical study of the key concepts of a language, with the purpose of conceptualizing the *Weltanschauung*, or worldview, of the culture in which the language is embedded.(Izutsu, 1997: 3)

One of the most widely employed approaches for analyzing the interrelationship between text and context in linguistic studies is semantics.(Nurfauzan, et al., 2024: 1573) Semantics, in essence, is the study of meaning.(Nafinuddin, 2020: 2) The term originates from *sema*, meaning "sign" or "symbol".(Zahra, et al., 2024: 158) In Greek, *semantikos* denotes "significant" or "conveying meaning".(Nafinuddin, 2020: 2) As a field within linguistics, semantics focuses on understanding meaning through language, symbols, or other forms of representation.(Simorangkir, et al., 2024: 1296) In Indonesian, semantics is commonly understood as "*makna*" (meaning), while in Arabic linguistics it corresponds to *'ilm al-dalālah,*(Suryaningrat, 2013: 106) a discipline that studies linguistic concepts both at the lexical level (*mufradāt*) and the structural level (*tarākib*).(Parhan, Maksum, & Munir, 2022: 121) In the author's view, semantics is thus the science concerned with analyzing the meanings of words within a given language.

Understanding the meaning of each Qur'anic verse requires careful attention to the methods and scholarly standards employed.(Wijaya & Malikah, 2021: 241) The first step in Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic analysis is to identify the word under investigation, referred to as the focus term. The next step is to explicate its basic meaning and relational meaning (Izutsu, 1997: 11) through syntagmatic and paradigmatic analysis.(Rahma, Harahap, & Ashani, 2023: 182) This is followed by determining its historical semantic

significance from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives. Izutsu categorized these into three periods: the pre-Qur'anic, Qur'anic, and post-Qur'anic stages.(Izutsu, 1997: 35) The final stage is to study the Weltanschauung (worldview). This stage serves as the culmination of Izutsu's methodology, aimed at uncovering the broader ideas conveyed by the Qur'an to its readers, so that these can be implemented in daily life. In this way, a way of living grounded in the revelation of the Qur'an is established, while simultaneously embodying a Qur'anic worldview of the universe.(Muhsinin, 2021: 57)

4. Semantic Analysis of the Word Qawm in the Qur'an

a. Basic Meaning

The basic meaning refers to the lexical sense that remains consistently attached to a word, regardless of its placement or usage in any context.(Izutsu, 1997: 12) This meaning represents the true lexical sense (*mufradāt*) of the word.(Ruslan, Safa, & Burga, 2023: 352) It can be identified through Arabic dictionaries, particularly those devoted to explaining Qur'anic terminology.(Muhsinin, 2021: 54)

Lexically, *qawm* means "people," "a multitude," or "a group of human beings".(Yunus, 2007: 361) In Al-Munawwir dictionary, *qawm* is defined as "people," "citizens," or "a nation".(Munawwir, 1997: 1173) Initially, the term *qawm* was used to describe a group of men (jamāʻah al-rijāl), though it could also be applied to groups of beings other than humans.(Faza, 2018: 4) Al-Rāghib al-Ashfahānī noted that *qawm*, derived from the root letter قَامَ–يَقُوْمُ–قِيَامًا means "standing". (Al-Ashfahani, 2017: 247)

Quraish Shihab noted, *qawm* derives from *qiyām* (قِيَام), meaning "to stand or to rise".

Initially, the term was used to describe a group of people who rose and stood in the context of battle to achieve a certain objective. For this reason, in its earliest usage, the word was applied exclusively to men.(Shihab, 1996: 331)

Qawm (قَوْم) means a group of men without any women..(Al-Ashfahani, 2017: 261)

Similarly, Ibn Fāris in *Muʻjam Maqāyīs al-Lughah* stated that *qawm* carries two principal meanings: it may refer to a group of human beings composed solely of men, or to groups of other beings besides humans.(Zakariya, 1979: 43)

This is reflected in the Qur'anic verse from Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt (49:11):

<div dir="rtl">

...... لَا يَسْخَرْ قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَوْمٍ عَسٰى اَنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَآءٌ مِّنْ نِّسَآءٍ عَسٰى اَنْ يَّكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ

۱۱........

</div>

".....Do not let some ⸢men⸣ ridicule others, they may be better than them, nor let ⸢some⸣ women ridicule other women, they may be better than them......"

Here, the word "women" (*nisā'*) is mentioned separately from *qawm*.(Anwar, 2018: 126) Another meaning associated with the term *qawm* is *'azīmah* (determination or resolve) and *intisāb* (responsibility or bearing a charge).(Zakariya, 1979: 43) The latter meaning appears in Qur'an Sūrat al-Nisā' (4:34):

<div dir="rtl">

اَلرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُوْنَ عَلَى النِّسَآءِ ۳٤

</div>

"Men are qawwāmūn (protectors and maintainers) over women..."

In general, the word *qawm* simply denotes "a people" or "a community" without distinction of gender, and it carries a neutral sense, not inherently positive or negative.(Kafrawi, 2021: 39) Although in its original usage it referred exclusively to men, in the Qur'an as a whole the term *qawm* is applied more broadly to indicate a collective, encompassing both men and women.(Al-Ashfahani, 2017: 262)

b. Relasional Meaning

Relational meaning refers to the additional sense attached to an already established meaning when a term is placed within a particular semantic field.(Izutsu, 1997: 12) Understanding a word's meaning cannot be separated from its interrelation with other vocabulary items within the same semantic domain.(Wardatussaadah, Hafizh, & Akmaliyah, 2025: 535) To identify the relational meaning of the term *qawm*, two types of analysis are required: syntagmatic and paradigmatic.

1) Syntagmatic Analysis

Syntagmatic analysis is conducted to reveal the relational meaning of the term *qawm* by examining its connection or relationship with the words that precede or follow it.(Fahimah, 2020: 120) In this context, *qawm* is associated with Allah, faith (*īmān*), human *characters* (both positive and negative), as well as the names of prophets and messengers.
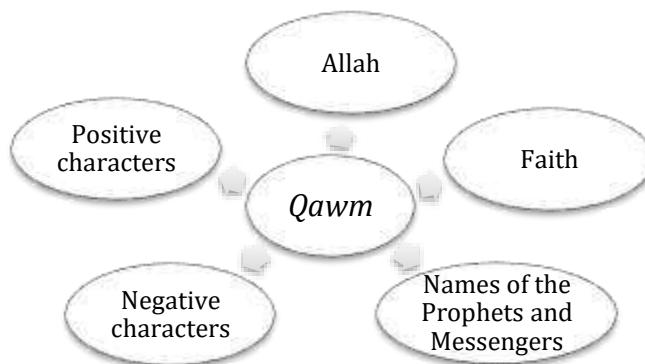
Picture 1. Syntagmatic Analysis
(The Relationship of the Term *Qawm* with Surrounding Words)
Semantic Qawm

The explanation regarding the syntagmatic relationship of the word *qawm* will be explained as follows:

2) The Relationship of *Qawm* with the Word of Allah

Qur'an Sūrah al-Ra'd (13:11):

<div dir="rtl">

.... اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتّٰى يُغَيِّرُوْا مَا بِاَنْفُسِهِمْ ١١

</div>

"...Indeed, Allah would never change a people's state ⌐of favour⌐ until they change their own state ⌐of faith⌐...."

Here, *qawm* denotes a collective of individuals engaged in societal transformation—a process that may begin with an individual and eventually extend to the community.(Shihab, 2002b: 568-569) This verse affirms that Allah possesses absolute authority over change. However, He does not will change for any *qawm* without the initiative for change arising from within the community itself. This highlights the active role of the people in determining their destiny through internal reform. Transformation often begins when a single individual emerges as a reformer, whose determination and efforts to improve conditions serve as an example for the entire *qawm*.(Dwi Fajri & Saepudin, 2022: 102-103) This relationship shows the existence of the principle of collective responsibility, a condition for divine change, where changing the fate of a people is not given freely, but demands change from within themselves and

the use of the word qawm also shows that this social law applies to the public whenever and wherever they live, regardless of race, religion or tribe..(Shihab, 2002b: 568-569)

3) The Relationship of *Qawm* with the Word of Faith (*Iman*)

Allah Swt. says in the Qur'an, Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt (49:11)

يَآاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا يَسْخَرْ قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَوْمٍ عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ ١١

"O believers! Do not let some ˹men˺ ridicule others, they may be better than them, nor let ˹some˺ women ridicule other women, they may be better than them.

This verse links the term *qawm* with *īmān* (faith), referring to groups of believers, whether male or female. It shows that *qawm* is inherently connected to human beings.(Siregar, 2016: 73) In this context, Allah issues a prohibition directed to all believers: they are not to mock or ridicule one another in any form. A believer, regardless of status or background, is not permitted to demean another believer for reasons such as poverty, mistakes, or other shortcomings.(Ath-Thabari, 2007: 742) Here, *qawm* signifies individuals or groups who believe in Allah. Faith, therefore, shapes mutual respect among communities. It becomes the ethical foundation for conduct: a *qawm* is expected to display good manners, refined speech, and mutual respect, avoiding ridicule or condescension, since human beings cannot ascertain who holds higher status in the sight of Allah Swt.

4) The Relationship of *Qawm* with the Word of Positive Characters

The positive character (*ṣifāt*) is also referred to as human disposition in general, which serves as the distinctive trait of an individual or a group of people.(Syafi'i & Syaoki, 2018: 91) In the Qur'an, the term *qawm* is frequently associated with certain moral and spiritual attributes (*aṣwāf*). These attributes are divided into positive (virtue) and negative (vice). Among the positive qualities that accompany the term *qawm* are: يُوقِنُون (*yūqinūn*, "those who are certain"), يَعْقِلُوْن (*ya'qilūn*, "those who reason"), يَعْلمُون (*ya'lamūn*, "those who know"), صٰلِحُون (*ṣāliḥūn*, "the righteous"), يَفْقَهُون (*yafqahūn*, "those who understand"), يُؤْمِنُون (*yu'minūn*, "those who believe"), يَذَّكَّرُوْن (*yadhdhakkarūn*, "those who take heed"), يَشْكُرُون (*yashkurūn*, "those who are grateful"), يَتَّقُوْن (*yattaqūn*, "those who are

God-fearing"), يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (*yatafakkarūn*, "those who reflect"), يَسْمَعُونَ (*yasma'ūn*, "those who listen"), عٰبِدُونَ ('*ābidūn*, "those who worship Allah"). Firman Allah Swt.:

QS. al-A'rāf/7 verse 52.

وَلَقَدْ جِئْنٰهُمْ بِكِتٰبٍ فَصَّلْنٰهُ عَلٰى عِلْمٍ هُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ٥٢

"Indeed, We have certainly brought them a Book which We detailed with knowledge—as guidance and mercy for a people who believe." (Sūrat al-A'rāf, 7:52)

QS. al-Naḥl/16 verse 12

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُوْمُ مُسَخَّرٰتٌ بِاَمْرِهٖ ۗ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَۙ

١٢

"And He has subjected for your benefit the night and the day, and the sun and the moon; and the stars are subjected by His command. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who understand."

QS. al-'Ankabūt/29 verse 51

اَوَلَمْ يَكْفِهِمْ اَنَّا اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ يُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ ۗ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَرَحْمَةً وَّذِكْرٰى لِقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ۟ ٥١

"Is it not sufficient for them that We sent down to you the Book, which is recited to them? Indeed, in this "Qur'an) is a mercy and reminder for a people who believe."

The relationship observed between the term *qawm* and these positive characters indicates that, whenever *qawm* is associated with one of them, the context typically relates to the manifestations of Allah's Majesty "*signs*" (اٰيٰت), Mercy (رَحْمَة), and Guidance (هُدًى) bestowed upon a righteous community. In this sense, *qawm* denotes a group of people characterized by noble values—such as love for Allah, faith, and piety. Such a *qawm* is consistently endowed by Allah with the capacity to think, to recognize and reflect upon the signs of His power, and to be granted His mercy and guidance. They are thus described as those who are able to receive and embrace all that Allah bestows upon them

5) The Relationship of *Qawm* with the Word of Negative Characters

Human character in Islam encompasses a wide range of traits derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah.(Sudaryono, 2019: 54) Just as the Qur'an associates *qawm* with positive attributes, it also links the term with negative qualities, thereby generating new relational meanings. Among the negative attributes connected to *qawm* in the Qur'an are: لَايَعْقِلُون (*lā ya'qilūn*, "those who do not reason") لَا يَعْلَمُون (*lā ya'lamūn*, "those who do not know") ظٰلِمُون (*ẓālimūn*, "wrongdoers"), كٰفِرُون (*kāfirūn*, "disbelievers"), فٰسِقِين (*fāsiqīn*, "the defiantly disobedient"), ضَالِّيْن (*ḍāllīn*, "those who go astray"), لَايَفْقَهُون (*lā yafqahūn*, "those who do not understand"), لَا يُؤْمِنُون (*lā yu'minūn*, "those who do not believe"), مُجْرِمِين (*mujrimīn*, "criminals"), مُسْرِفُون (*musrifūn*, "those who transgress"), خٰسِرُون (*khāsirūn*, "the losers"), تَجْهَلُون (*tajhalūn*, "ignorant"), عَادُون ((*'ādūn*, "those who overstep limits"), يَعْدِلُون (*ya'dilūn*, "those who deviate from the truth"), مُفْسِدِين (*mufsidīn*, "those who spread corruption"), خٰصِمُون (*khāṣimūn*, "quarrelsome"), طَاغُون (*ṭāghūn*, "tyrannical"), خِيَانَة (*khiyānah*, "treacherous").

In this context, *qawm* depicts groups that are distant from divine guidance, characterized by reprehensible moral and social traits. as indicated in the following verses of the Qur'an

QS. al-Munāfiqūn/63 verse 6

سَوَآءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ اَسْتَغْفَرْتَ لَهُمْ اَمْ لَمْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ لَنْ يَّغْفِرَ اللهُ لَهُمْ اِنَّ اللهَ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ٦

"It is all the same for them whether you ask forgiveness for them or do not ask forgiveness for them; Allah will never forgive them. Indeed, Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people (al-qawma al-fāsiqīn)."

QS. al-An'ām/6 verse 47

قُلْ اَرَاَيْتَكُمْ اِنْ اَتٰكُمْ عَذَابُ اللهِ بَغْتَةً اَوْ جَهْرَةً هَلْ يُهْلَكُ اِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ٤٧

"Say, [O Muhammad], 'Have you considered: if the punishment of Allah comes to you suddenly or openly, will any be destroyed except the wrongdoing people (al-qawmu al-ẓālimūn)?'"

QS. Al-An'am/6 ayat 147

فَاِنْ كَذَّبُوْكَ فَقُلْ رَّبُّكُمْ ذُوْ رَحْمَةٍ وَّاسِعَةٍ وَّلَا يُرَدُّ بَأْسُهٗ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ١٤٧

"But if they deny you, [O Muhammad], say, 'Your Lord is the possessor of vast mercy; but His punishment cannot be repelled from the wicked people (al-qawmi al-mujrimīn).'"

The author finds that whenever *qawm* is associated with one of these negative characters, the context usually concerns divine punishment, torment, or destruction, with such communities being deprived of Allah's guidance. The syntagmatic relationship between *qawm* and these negative attributes demonstrates that the Qur'an does not identify communities based on lineage or ethnicity but rather by their moral traits and their response to Allah's message. A *qawm*—or a group of people—marked by corrupt traits will not be granted guidance by Allah and will ultimately face chastisement, punishment, and destruction

6) The Relationship of *qawm* with the Names of Prophets and Messengers

The connection between the term *qawm* and the names of prophets and messengers is frequently encountered in the Qur'an. In fact, in the majority of surahs where the term *qawm* appears, its context often refers to the communities of prophets and messengers. For example Allah Swt. said in the following verses of the Qur'an:

QS. At- al-Tawbah/9 ayat 70

اَلَمْ يَأْتِهِمْ نَبَاُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ قَوْمِ نُوْحٍ وَّعَادٍ وَّثَمُوْدَ ۙ وَقَوْمِ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاَصْحٰبِ مَدْيَنَ وَالْمُؤْتَفِكٰتِ

اَتَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ ٧٠

"Have they not received the stories of those ⸢destroyed⸣ before them: the people of Noah, 'Âd, and Thamûd, the people of Abraham, the residents of Midian, and the overturned cities ⸢of Lot⸣?[1] Their messengers came to them with clear proofs. Allah would have never wronged them, but it was they who wronged themselves.

Other verses of the Qur'an, surah Hūd/11 verse 89

وَيٰقَوْمِ لَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شِقَاقِيْٓ اَنْ يُّصِيْبَكُمْ مِّثْلُ مَآ اَصَابَ قَوْمَ نُوْحٍ اَوْ قَوْمَ هُوْدٍ اَوْ قَوْمَ صٰلِحٍ ۗوَمَا قَوْمُ لُوْطٍ

مِّنْكُمْ بِبَعِيْدٍ ٨٩

"And O my people, Do not let your opposition to me lead you to a fate similar to that of the people of Noah, or Hûd, or Ṣâliḥ. And the people of Lot are not far from you.

These aforementioned verses serve as examples of Allah's words that illustrate the explicit relationship between the term *qawm* and the names of prophets and messengers. In such contexts, *qawm* denotes groups of people inhabiting specific regions who lived under the guidance or influence of a prophet. These communities were divided into two categories: those who accepted and obeyed the teachings of the prophet, and those who rejected and opposed them. This relationship underscores that every prophet was sent to a particular community, and the destiny—whether prosperity or destruction—of each *qawm* depended upon its stance toward the prophetic message.

c. Paradigmatic Analysis

Paradigmatic analysis refers to an analytical technique that seeks meaning by examining the relationships between lexical elements through their connection with synonymous or antonymous terms. Several expressions are identified as synonyms of the term *qawm*, including *ummah*, *qabīlah*, *sha'b*, and *firqah*.(Kafrawi, 2021: 38) Conversely, antonyms of *qawm* include *nafs* ("the self") (Sejati et al., 2024: 627) and *fard* ("individual" or "single entity").(Al-Ashfahani, 2017: 41)

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          Synonym                        Antonym
           Qawm                           Qawm

ummat  qabilah  sya'b  firqah        nafs    fardan
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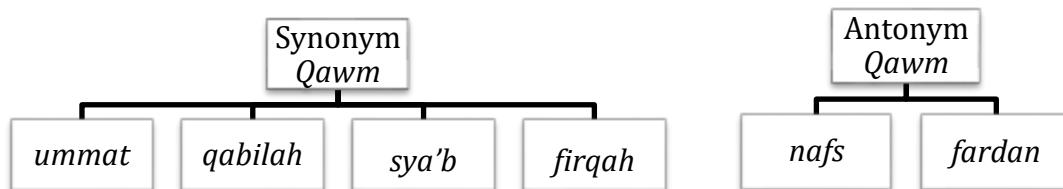
Picture 2. Paradigmatic Analysis (synonym dan antonym of *qawm*)

d. Synchronic and Diachronic Aspects

The synchronic aspect refers to the dimension of a concept or word that remains constant and does not undergo change, whereas the diachronic aspect denotes the dimension that evolves or changes over time.(Fahimah, 2020: 125) In brief, from a synchronic perspective, the meaning of a word remains the same; however, from a diachronic perspective, its meaning may shift in accordance with historical and cultural developments.(Sugiyono, 2023: 132) Izutsu addresses this matter by categorizing the historical development of meaning into three periods: the pre-Qur'anic era or the Age of Ignorance (*Jāhiliyyah*), the Qur'anic era when the Qur'an was revealed, and the post-Qur'anic era following the revelation.(Izutsu, 1997: 35)

1) Pre Qur'anic Periode

The pre-Qur'anic period, also known as the *Jāhiliyyah* era, refers to the history of the Arabs before the advent of Islam and prior to the revelation of the Qur'an,(Buana, 2021: 5) Izutsu explains that during this period, three different lexical systems emerged, each grounded in a distinct worldview: the vocabulary of the Bedouin Arabs—represented in the corpus of pre-Islamic (*Jāhiliyyah*) poetry—the vocabulary of trading communities, and the lexicon of Jewish-Christian groups of the time.(Izutsu, 1997: 35)

In this era, Arabic poetry (*shi'r*) was one of the most highly esteemed literary forms, and it remained influential even beyond the period, shaping Islamic civilization as well as Arab culture.(Cahyani & Akmaliyah, 2025: 585-586) The term *qawm* was already in use among pre-Islamic Arabs, primarily to refer to groups of men. This can be seen in the following poet:

<div dir="rtl">

وَما أَدري وَسَوفَ إِخالُ أَدري   #   أَقَومٌ آلُ حِصنٍ أَم نِساءُ

</div>

I do not know, though I think I do know—are they the men of the Hisn clan, or women? (Zakariya, 1979: 43)

This line, attributed to the wise poet Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā, shows that *qawm* referred specifically to men, while women were mentioned separately as *nisā'* (women).

Another poet from Labīd ibn Rabī'ah reads:

<div dir="rtl">

مِنْ مَعْشَرٍ سَنَّتْ لَهُمْ آبَاؤُهُمْ   #   وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ سُنَّةٌ وَاِمَامُهَا

</div>

My people come from a lineage devoted to nobility; and for every community there is a tradition and its leader.(Wargadinata & Fitriani, 2018: 123)

This succinctly illustrates that every *qawm* has its own guide who preserves and upholds its traditions (Wargadinata & Fitriani, 2018). It reflects the worldview of pre-Islamic Arab culture, which highly esteemed ancestral heritage, collective identity, and traditional leadership. It also highlights that the social existence of a *qawm* was inseparable from inherited systems of values, and that each group constructed its own world through its traditions and leaders.

From the aforementioned verses of poetry, it can be understood that in its earliest usage, the term *qawm* was indeed applied exclusively to groups of men. This is because the root of *qawm* is *qiyām*, meaning "to stand," which in this context connotes rising to defend or uphold something—roles that, within the social structure, were typically carried out by men, such as warfare, leadership, and tribal protection. Furthermore, in *Jāhiliyyah* society, *qawm* referred to tribal communities bound by lineage (*nasab*) and group solidarity, where an individual was honored or disgraced depending on the status of their *qawm*. Thus, during the pre-Islamic period, *qawm* functioned as the primary marker of a person's social identity.

2) Qur'anic Periode

The Qur'anic period refers to the span of time during which the Qur'an was revealed, beginning with the first revelation and continuing until the death of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).(Mustofa, 2022: 82) During this era, the meaning of *qawm* can be traced through the verses in which it appears, analyzed in light of their place of revelation—*Makkiyyah* (Meccan) or *Madaniyyah* (Medinan). Notably, the majority of verses containing the term *qawm* were revealed in the Meccan period, though the contextual nuances vary depending on the place of revelation.

In the Meccan period, the term *qawm* is predominantly employed in reference to the communities of earlier prophets as narrated in the Qur'an, as well as to denote groups characterized by either virtuous or reprehensible qualities. Examples include *qawm* in relation to the people of Prophet Yunus in Qur'an 10:98, and in Qur'an 11:60, 70, 74, and 89 concerning the communities of other prophets, among many others.

By contrast, in the Medinan period, although some verses still reference the communities of earlier prophets or describe groups distinguished by positive or negative traits, the primary usage of *qawm* shifts toward a legal and regulatory context. Here, the verses emphasize the implementation of divine ordinances revealed to specific communities, particularly concerning social transactions (*mu'āmalah*), charity, warfare, and other aspects of communal life. Illustrative examples include Qur'an 2:230 and 2:264 regarding divorce and charity; Qur'an 3:140 and 4:90, 92 concerning warfare; and Qur'an 5:58 and 5:108 addressing prayer, inheritance, and related legal matters.

In general, during the period of Qur'anic revelation, *qawm* continued to denote a group of people; however, within the Qur'an, its evaluation was based on moral conduct and spiritual response to divine revelation. A *qawm* is described as virtuous when it believes, submits to the truth, and upholds the values of *tawḥīd* and justice; conversely, a *qawm* that rejects faith, commits injustice, and opposes the prophets is portrayed as a community destined for destruction. Thus, the worth of a *qawm* is not determined by ethnic lineage but rather by faith and righteous deeds.

3) Pasca Qur'anic Periode

After the revelation of the Qur'an, the semantic scope of *qawm* developed further. Prior to the Qur'an, the term *qawm* referred exclusively to a group of men; however, its meaning later expanded to denote a group of people in general, encompassing both men and women. Imam al-Qurṭubī explains that *qawm* (قَوْم) the plural of *qāʾim* (قَائِم "an individual who stands") subsequently came to refer to any collective, even if they were not literally in a standing position.(Al-Qurthubi, 2007:60) Similarly, Imam al-Ṭabarī states that *qawm* designates a group of people bound by shared social ties, nationality, or religion. In his exegesis of Qur'an, Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt (49:11), he emphasizes that *qawm* in this verse is general, applying to all groups without distinction of social status or condition.(Ath-Thabari, 2007: 740-742)

Quraish Shihab also explains that *qawm* is used to indicate a community of people.(Shihab, 2002a: 251) Along the same line, Buya Hamka, in his tafsīr, states that *qawm* refers to a collective of people bound together in a social community or the *ummah* as a whole, rather than to an individual,(Hamka, 1982a: 3741) For Hamka, *qawm* encompasses men and women alike, signifying human groups united by mutual respect, equality, and Islamic brotherhood (*ukhuwwah islāmiyyah*).(Hamka, 1982b: 6827-6828) The term *qawm* and its derivative *qawmiyyah* are frequently interpreted as "nation" and "nationalism." In contemporary usage, Arabs employ the phrase *al-qawmiyyah al-ʿarabiyyah* to refer to Arab nationalism.(Shihab, 1996: 330)

The term was later absorbed into the Indonesian language as *kaum*, which has several meanings: first, an ethnic group (*suku bangsa*); second, relatives (*sanak saudara*); third, a class of people sharing the same profession, outlook, or social rank; and fourth, a

matrilineal family line.(Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2008: 637) In present-day Indonesian discourse, *kaum* is also widely used in colloquial contexts to denote groups of people with common interests, traits, or characteristics—for example, *kaum milenial* ("millennials") and *kaum rebahan* ("those who love to lounge"), referring respectively to the millennial generation and to those who prefer leisure and rest. (Fitri, et al., 2022: 87)

e. Weltanschauung

Weltanschauung, also referred to as *worldview*, constitutes the final and most essential stage in Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic methodology.(Ubad, 2020: 41) The Qur'anic worldview reflects its vision of the universe. This concept forms the framework by which society perceives and conveys Qur'anic values within life, thereby shaping a way of living that adheres to divine commands and actualizes the Qur'an's vision in worldly reality.(Muhsinin, 2021: 57)

The Qur'anic Weltanschauung related to *qawm* reveals the conceptual framework of *qawm* within the Qur'an. The Qur'an employs the term *qawm* to denote a collective of people—both men and women—who dwell in a particular locality and live together within a community or nation. The Qur'an divides the meaning of *qawm* into two categories: positive and negative. In its positive sense, *qawm* refers to communities who believe, obey God, follow the teachings of the prophets, and are thus worthy of divine assistance and blessing. Conversely, in its negative sense, *qawm* designates those who deny the truth, oppose the prophets, associate partners with God, and ultimately meet destruction. Thus, the Qur'an conceptualizes *qawm* as a community engaged in moral and spiritual dynamics.

This worldview indicates that the Qur'an evaluates human collectives not on the basis of ethnicity, culture, or ancestral origin. This stands in contrast to the pre-Islamic *Jāhiliyyah* period, in which the highest value was absolute loyalty to one's *qawm*. At that time, personal identity was subsumed under the collective identity of the tribe, and a person's honor or disgrace was measured by the position of their *qawm*. In the Qur'an, however, the notion of *qawm* is transformed: a community is judged by its stance toward divine values. A *qawm* is loved by God for its piety or destroyed for its disbelief. The worth of an individual is no longer determined by tribal affiliation, but rather by faith, truth, and morality. This reflects the Qur'an's perspective that faith and righteousness

serve as the ultimate criteria for evaluating human existence, both as individuals and as members of a community.

D. CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussion, this study finds that Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic approach reveals that the term *qawm* as mentioned in the Qur'an carries the basic meaning of "people," "community," or "a group of human beings." The term *qawm* is closely connected with other words in the Qur'an, such as *Allah*, *īmān* (faith), attributes (both positive and negative), and the names of prophets and messengers, each of which provides its own contextual nuance. The meaning of *qawm* may also be further understood through its synonyms and antonyms. Among its synonyms are *ummah*, *qabīlah*, *sha'b*, and *firqah*, while its antonyms include *nafs* (the self) and *fard* (individual).

From a historical perspective, during the *Jāhiliyyah* period *qawm* was used exclusively to denote groups of men in Arab tribal society, where one's value was determined by lineage and social function within the tribe. In the Qur'anic period, however, the Qur'an shifted the evaluation of a *qawm* from its genealogy to its moral and spiritual stance toward God's revelation: a believing community was praised, while those who rejected the truth were warned or destroyed. In the post-Qur'anic era, scholars explained that *qawm* came to encompass both men and women and referred more broadly to groups united by social and religious bonds.

The Qur'anic worldview regarding *qawm* demonstrates that the term refers to a collective of human beings, both male and female, living together within a community. The Qur'an presents *qawm* in two dimensions: positive—communities of faith who obey God—and negative—communities of disbelief who reject His message. The Qur'an's evaluation of a *qawm* is not based on ethnicity or culture but on their response to divine values. Thus, faith and truth serve as the ultimate standards by which human existence is assessed, both at the individual and collective level.

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