# An Indonesian Initiative to Make the Qur'an Down-to-Earth: Muhammad Quraish Shihab and His School of Exegesis

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# Table of Contents

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# Transliteration

## Consonants

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ء | ʾ | ز | z | ك | k |
| ا | a | س | s | ل | l |
| ب | b | ش | sh | م | m |
| ت | t | ص | ṣ | ن | n |
| ث | th | ض | ḍ | و | w |
| ج | j | ط | ṭ | ه | h |
| ح | ḥ | ظ | ẓ | ي | y |
| خ | kh | ع | ʿ | ال | al and ʻl |
| د | d | غ | gh | ة | a (in construct |
| ذ | dh | ف | f | | state: *-at*) |
| ر | r | ق | q | | |

## Vowels

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Long | آ | ā | Short | ـَ | a |
| | إي | ī | | ـِ | i |
| | أو | ū | | ـُ | u |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Doubled | ـِيْ | iyy (final form ī) | Diphthongs | أي | ai |
| | ـُوْ | uww (final form ū) | | أو | au |

# Introduction

In the first three decades of the 20th century, an impetus toward Islamic religious reformism emerged in the region that is now called Indonesia when pilgrims and students returned into their homeland from the Middle East and thereby brought with them the spirit of religious reform that had become rampant in the Middle East at the time. Islamic reformism, which in many cases is also called Islamic modernism,[1] declared itself to be a strong proponent of *ijtihād*, independent interpretation of the revealed texts, over the prevailing traditional practice of adherence to the Shāfiʿī or any other school (*madhhab*). Reformism appeared to oppose the syncretic practice of religion with local cultures that had become widely popular among the nominal Muslims (*abangan*). It also tended to be suspicious of many aspects of the Islamic traditional culture which had, for long time, maintained a closer link with the *abangan* culture as manifested in the adoption of Sufism which assumed a place of central importance in the traditional system of religious education (Barton 1997:36).

It should be noted that the term modernism is employed by many scholars of Indonesian Islam to describe a shift from the prevailing practice of religion in the first half of the 20th century toward a more independent reasoning and purified practices. The boundaries between traditionalism and modernism, however, have become increasingly blurred since the 1970s, especially after the great expansion of the state school system that was rapidly accelerated under the New Order government. There is a growing tendency to accept the idea that the truth lies in synthesis rather than antithesis. The modernists have generally become less radical in their rejection of

[1] In this study the term "Islamic reformism" will be used consistently to describe new trends of religious thought and articulation of religion in the Muslim world and Indonesia, particularly. The term modernism, as Michael F. Laffan (Laffan 2003:7–8; 122) argues, is problematic because the 'young generation' (*kaum muda*) never claimed to be trying to modernize the Islamic faith. Moreover, the most prominent inspirational figure of reform, Muḥammad ʿAbduh (1845-1905) more usually describes their job as working for "reform" (*iṣlāḥ*) or "renewal" (*tajdīd*) of the Muslim community. The term modernism may have come from the colonial officials who viewed religious reformism in the Muslim world as identical to Protestantism in Europe. Moreover, the tradition-modernity dichotomy, as Reinhard Schulze (1987:190–91, 205) argues, was the creation of European researchers and colonial officers to describe the Islamic world in a way that fit the European patterns of the history of mind and culture. This categorization was then adopted by a number of indigenous elites and scholars.

traditionalist values, and at the same time, the traditionalists show eagerness to adopt some modernist values (Bruinessen 1990:227–28; Liddle 1996:623).

However, it would be misleading to assume that the Indonesian reformists, who were mostly urban and middle-class, were much more superior to the traditionalists in terms of religious scholarship. The reformist slogan of returning to the scriptural sources and rejection of Islamic traditionalism effectively led many of them to reject traditionalist scholarship, cutting them away from the classical intellectual legacy of Islam that had been nurtured in the traditional institution of *pesantren*. Accordingly, Indonesian reformists were seldom more likely to genuinely implement their declarative statement of *ijtihād* than their *madhhab*-bound compatriots, for very few of them had sufficient scholarly apparatus, lacking an acquaintance with scholarly religious tradition or a full command of classical Arabic (Barton 1997:36–7, 41). Indonesian reformists or modernists appeared to be much more concerned with the issue of religious purification, averting from any syncretic and 'innovative' practices of religion.

Beginning in the 1940s, Muslim leaders became deeply involved in *Realpolitik*, politics based on practical consideration and power competition rather than merely ideological and moral notions. This is marked with the establishment of the Masyumi Party in 1945 which initially accommodated political interests of both reformist and traditionalist Muslims. The political rupture between traditionalists and reformists occurred in the 1950s, ostensibly due to the issue of a leadership position within Masyumi and led to the withdrawal of the traditionalist faction that eventually reshaped Nahdlatul Ulama (NU, the Awakening of the *ʿUlamāʾ*) into a political party in 1952 (Barton 1997:39; Boland 1982:47; Ricklefs 2001:293), which represented religion (Islam) during Sukarno's Guided Democracy (*Demokrasi Terpimpin*, 1959-1966). *Realpolitik* made Muslim leaders deeply involved in a continuous struggle with pragmatic considerations for power. Accordingly, the involvement of great Muslim minds in politics – until the 1960s – is often seen as a major cause for the stagnation of Islamic scholarship in Indonesia. The slogan of *ijtihād*, which was explicitly encouraged by Muslim reformists in the early 20th century, did not contribute significantly to the development of Islamic religious scholarship as many may expect.

From this backdrop, there emerged voices for a concrete renewal of religious thought, primarily from a younger generation, whom Greg Barton calls "neo-modernist" Muslims; students with traditionalist backgrounds who also had access to higher education in the post-colonial era. This generation tends to be open-minded and progressive, independent in thought with a positive attitude – though remaining critical – toward modernity, progress, and development (Barton 1997:66–7). Pioneering efforts, in fact, had been made by Harun Nasution (1919-1998) and A. Mukti Ali (1923-2004) who contributed to the "modernization" of state Islamic universities of Indonesia (Barton 1997:42). However, an open statement for the necessity of religious thought came from Nurcholish Madjid (1939-2005) who delivered his controversial speech in January 1970, hailing "Islam yes, Islamic parties no!"[2] By this he assumed that political Islam no longer constituted the main interest of Indonesian Muslims and, at the same time, Islamic parties constantly reproduced obsolete views, devoid of attraction and dynamism (Madjid 1998:285). Of course, Madjid's view became sensible when it became clear for him that the New Order government (1966-1998) would not leave space for serious political opposition from Islamic groups. Thus, he came to argue that the energies of Islamic intellectuals should not be focused narrowly on politics (Barton 1997:46).[3]

The New Order was a powerful authoritarian government which was backed by military power. It never hesitated to use coercive power to achieve its objectives. In the field of religious life, the regime strongly imposed tolerance among the

[2] Nurchalish Madjid was born on March 17, 1939 into a family with a traditionalist background, but had acquaintance with the Masyumi Party. He was a prominent Indonesian intellectual who firmly advocated the necessity of renewal of religious thought, particularly in the context of modern Indonesia. On January 2, 1970, he delivered his speech in a seminar of student organizations as the National Chairperson of Islamic Students Association (*Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam*, HMI).

[3] For the purpose of renewal of Islamic thought, Madjid used such bold terms as secularization (*sekularisasi*), liberalization (*liberalisasi*) and desacralization (*desakralisasi*). He viewed that the Indonesian reading of Islam was again trapped in an acute stagnation due to the lack of what he called "psychological striking force" (Madjid 1998:284). The development of Islam and the increasing number of Muslims were not followed by the dynamism of Islamic thought. Thus, he called for the liberalization of outlooks toward the present teachings of Islam. This effort involved, first, a process of secularization. By "secularization", he did not mean the application of ideological secularism, as understood by his critics who were inflamed with his ideas. Rather, he meant secularization as the "temporalizing" of values that are in fact worldly, and the liberation of the Muslim community (*umma*) from the tendency to spiritualize those values (Madjid 1998:286). The second process is intellectual freedom, which is expected to provide the ultimate good, as the competition of testing truth is widely open in the market. And the third is "the idea of progress and open attitude". By this, Madjid meant that man was basically good and pure, and loves truth and progress. By such nature, man should not be afraid of changes which always occur in the temporal value system of humans. As long as this idea is taken consistently, there would be an open attitude in the form of "a readiness to accept and take (temporal) values from whatever sources as long as they contain truth" (Madjid 1998:287).

adherents of various religions. It oppressed the so-called "political Islam", but supported the so-called "cultural Islam" as partly shown with the development of Islamic schools and universities (Hefner 2000:121–22; Liddle 1996:624). The political situation during the New Order, the modernization of the Islamic educational system, and the strengthened voices for a renewal of religious thought were more likely to form a solid ground for the development of Islamic religious scholarship in Indonesia. Intellectual products to make Islam workable with the idea of the Indonesian (nation) state, religious plurality, modernity, and globalization mushroomed during this period. It is in this context that Muhammad Quraish Shihab, an Indonesian Qur'an exegete whose intellectual works are under our discussion here, arose to prominence.

This study aims at examining Quraish Shihab's exegetical thoughts and civilizing project: his articulation of religion in the modern and pluralistic context of Indonesia and his school of exegesis. It does not aim, however, at describing Shihab's biography and intellectual career in minute detail. It attempts to answer the following questions: What does Quraish Shihab mean with his cultural and religious project of "making the Qur'an down-to-earth" (*membumikan al-Qur'an*)? How does he approach and read the Qur'an? How does he reconcile the fixed text with the constantly changing realities? What is the root of his scholarship, and what are the important features of his school of exegesis? As he also acts as a media scholar, what does he offer to the public and what is his strategy to maintain his existence in the public sphere?

## An Overview of Qur'anic Exegetical Activity in Indonesia

Scholars, Anthony H. Johns among others, have argued that there had been abundant evidence of the vernacularization of Islamic scholarship in some parts of the Malay Archipelago since the 16th century as evident in the widespread use of the Arabic script, the confident use of Arabic loan words, and the emergence of literary works inspired by Arabic and Persian models (Johns 1998:121; Ichwan 2011:84). Aceh was, at the time, an important hub for the early substantial holding of Islamic scholarship in the archipelago. *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* by ʿAbd al-Raʾūf al-Sinkīlī (d. 1105/1693) was the first Malay-*Jawi* existing commentary of the whole Qur'an, which considerably made reference to the exegetical works of al-Jalālain, al-Baiḍāwī and al-Khāzin (Riddell 1989:119). Before al-Sinkīlī, religious literary activity was closely

linked to Ḥamzah al-Fanṣūri (d. 998/1590) and Shams al-Dīn al-Sūmaṭrānī (d. 1039/1630) – the proponents of Sufistic thought linked to that of Muḥy al-Dīn ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240) – whose works were destroyed by the followers of Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī (d. 1068/1658) who was also a high ranking religious scholar at Aceh's court.

Given the fact of the intellectual religious richness in the late 16th century and the considerable existence of Islam in the Malay Archipelago since the 13th century, scholars argue that there might have been exegetical works predating *Tarjumān*, which was written in the late 17th century. Rendering and translations of the Qur'anic verses are found in some Malay religious works before *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*, including within the surviving copies of the works of al-Fanṣūri and al-Sūmaṭrānī and a Malay commentary of *Sūrat al-Kahf* (Chapter of the Cave) by an anonymous author whose manuscript was brought to Europe in the beginning of the 17th century. The manuscript is now preserved in the Cambridge University Library (Johns 1998:123–24; Riddell 1989:112–14).

From the 18th century we find *Kitāb Farāʿiḍ al-Qurʾān* by an anonymous author. From the 19th century we have *Tafsir al-Qur'an dalam Bahasa Melayu* (Qur'anic Exegesis in the Malay Language) which is a complete *Jawi* – Malay language written in the Arabic script – exegesis in 10 volumes with the interlineal Malay commentary whose manuscript is preserved in the National Library of Indonesia (Ichwan 2011:85–6). From this century we also have an Arabic commentary, *Tafsīr al-Munīr* by Muḥammad Nawawī al-Bantanī (d. 1314/1897) who lived in Mecca. In addition, we also find an exegetical work in Javanese with the Arabic script (*pegon*), namely *Faiḍ al-Qurʾān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (1894) by Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ ibn ʿUmar al-Samarānī (d. 1321/1903). Howard Federspiel (1994:3) argues that before the 20th century, much of the Islamic literature in the region was in general Sufistic in outlook, and centered on good manners and stories using Islamic characters.

In the 20th century, Indonesia witnessed an abundance of works on Qur'anic exegesis.[4] This can be explained particularly with the increasing call for direct reading of the revealed texts that reverberated in the beginning of the century. In Indonesia's 20th century, working on the Qur'an, either in the form of translation or commentary,

[4] Howard Federspiel (1994:130–37) in his book *Popular Indonesian Literature of the Qur'an* examines 60 Qur'an-related works in Indonesia's 20th century which heavily rely on Sunni Islamic sources.

was mostly linked to reformist Muslim scholars (Federspiel 1991:157; Ichwan 2001) who viewed the necessity of understanding Islam directly from its revealed text. One to mention is Mahmud Yunus (1899-1982) who studied at al-Azhar and Dār al-ʿUlūm in Cairo from 1924 to 1930 and who, in 1922, had published three sections of his *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* in the *Jawi* script in the midst of a theological prohibition on translating the Qur'an (Yunus 1973:iii). It should be noted that the *Jawi* script, until the first quarter of the 20th century, had been widely adopted in Qur'anic exegetical works in Indonesia before it was significantly replaced by the Latin script.[5] In the 1930s Yunus, with the assistance of H.M.K. Bakhry, published his complete *Tafsīr*.

*Tafsīr al-Furqān* by Ahmad Hassan (1887-1958), a leading figure of the reformist organization of Persatuan Islam (PERSIS, the Unity of Islam), first appeared serially in 1928, but was published in a complete form in 1956 and was an important pioneer of Qur'anic commentary written in Indonesian and printed in the Latin script. The work is actually best viewed as a translation than a work of *tafsīr* proper, for the non-literal interpretation in it comes only in the form of footnotes. This work can be seen as part of Hassan's larger project of advocating *ijtihād* (Feener 1998:61). *Tafsīr al-Nūr* from Muhammad Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy (1904-1975), which was first published in 1956, marked the increasing use of the Latin script in Indonesian literature of the Qur'an. Methodologically, ash-Shiddieqy draws heavily on *Tafsīr al-Marāghī*, which attempts to make Qur'anic interpretation more accessible to a wider audience. In terms of spirit, it appropriates the modern spirit of Islamic reformism (Feener 1998:62). In addition, *Tafsir Quran Hidaajatur Rahmaan* (first published in 1958 in Javanese using the Latin script) by Munawar Khalil (d. 1908-1961), a reformist linked to PERSIS and Muhammadiyah, also envisions its author's larger project of religious reformism, attacking what the author deemed mystical and heretical aspects in Qur'anic interpretation (Hamim 1996:81–2).

*Tafsir al-Azhar* by Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (1908-1981), known by his acronym Hamka, offers important commentary in modern Indonesia for its unique reference to the events of the 20th century of Indonesia and the author's reflections on

[5] Moch. Nur Ichwan (2011) observes that the increasing popularity of the Latin script was due to several factors: its introduction by the Dutch colonial government at the administrative and educational levels in the late 19th century, its positive response by both indigenous nationalists and Muslim leaders, the Japanese continuation of the Dutch policy in using the Latin script, and its adoption by the Indonesian state as the script for the Indonesian language.

them, e.g., critique on secular nationalism, communism, Sukarno's authoritarianism, and the Muslim response to Christian mission in Indonesia (Federspiel 1991:152, 1994:64; Wan Yusof 1997). Hamka was not only a religious scholar and preacher, but also a journalist and politician. The commentary material was initially presented in a series of early morning lectures at the al-Azhar mosque in Jakarta and was also published serially in the magazine *Gema Islam* (the Voice of Islam). It was then completed during his imprisonment (1962-1964) by Sukarno's communist-backed government (Feener 1998:62–3; Wan Yusof 1997:172–73). Hamka's commentary draws on a number of classical and modern sources with greater emphasis on modern Egyptian exegeses, especially *Tafsīr al-Manār* of Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍa and *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān* of Sayyid Quṭb (Feener 1998:63; Wan Yusof 1997:177–76). Relating the Qur'an and Indonesia's twentieth-century social and political context by means of local life-experience, *Tafsir al-Azhar* can be seen as an attempt to "terrestrialize and indigenize" (*membumikan dan mempribumikan*) Islam in Indonesia (Wan Yusof 1997:269).

As we shall see below, the exegetical works of Quraish Shihab are a continuation of the same spirit of Islamic reformism that had been broadly aspired to through Indonesia's twentieth-century major Qur'anic exegetical works. He confirms Hamka's pioneering attempt of "indigenizing" the Qur'an in the pluralistic Indonesian context. What is unique from his predecessors is that Shihab also introduces more systematic and sophisticated methods of interpretation that are extensively derived from his experience of studies at al-Azhar in Cairo.

## A Biographical Sketch of Muhammad Quraish Shihab

Muhammad Quraish Shihab is a leading Indonesian exegete who has been familiar not only within the elite Indonesian academic circle, but also among urban Indonesian Muslim society. He is one among only a few Indonesian graduates of al-Azhar in Cairo who are able to obtain intellectual prestige, as well as social fame. His successful intellectual career is espoused by the fact that he is a doctoral graduate of al-Azhar with distinction in the field of Qur'anic exegesis – probably the first one from Southeast Asia (Kusmana 2007:186) – and is also a prolific author of Qur'an-related books. His social fame is espoused by his active role in giving religious lectures and

sermons in various religious circles, and also by his success in maintaining appearances on some national television programs.

Quraish Shihab's life and career have been variously discussed in many academic works in Indonesia. He was born on February 16, 1944 in Rappang, South Sulawesi, into a notable and educated family of the Alawi *Sāda.*[6] His father, Abdurrahman Shihab (1905-1986), was a merchant, politician, preacher and professor of Qur'anic exegesis at Muslim University of Indonesia and then at State Islamic University (IAIN) of Makassar. Meanwhile, his mother, Asma, was a sister of Sultan Rappang, of Bugis ethnicity.

As a boy, together with his siblings, he used to listen to the lectures of his father in their house.[7] After finishing his elementary school, Quraish was sent to Malang to continue his secondary school and to learn religious knowledge at a *pesantren* (traditional boarding-based religious school), namely *Darul Hadits al-Faqihiyah*, under the guidance of a charismatic Tarim-born teacher, al-Ḥabīb ʿAbd al-Qadīr ibn Aḥmad Bilfaqīh (1896-1962), with whom Quraish was impressed with his charisma and spiritual depth. Quraish admits that he was among those closest students of Bilfaqīh and used to accompany him during his travels for giving religious lectures (Anwar, Siregar, and Djuraid 2014:45–54). He spent only two years (1956 – 1958) in Malang, because he obtained a scholarship from the regional government of Sulawesi to continue his studies at al-Azhar in Cairo. Accompanied by his younger brother, Alwi (b. 1946), Quraish Shihab arrived in Cairo in 1958 and was admitted to al-Azhar's secondary school.

Quraish Shihab arrived in Cairo some years after Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918-1970) rose to power. The period of Nasser is marked by an attempt of modernizing al-Azhar with the enactment of Reform Law Number 103 in 1961 which aimed to integrate the *ʿulamāʾ* (religious scholars) into the changing and modernizing part of

[6] The Alawi *Sāda* (sing. *sayyid*) is a group of Arab families originating from Hadramaut, Yemen, who claim descent from the Prophet Muhammad. They trace their line to the Prophet through al-Ḥusain (d. 61/680), a son of Fāṭima (d. 11/632) and ʿAlī (d. 40/661). The Alawi *sāda* are the descendants of al-Imām Aḥmad ibn ʿĪsā al-Muhājir (d. 345/956) who came from Basra with his family to Hadramaut in 952 AD. In Hadramaut, the *sāda* occupied the highest social stratum (Bujra 1967:356; Mobini-Kesheh 1999:25). In an interview with Quraish Shihab on July 24, 2012, he slightly recounted the background of his family that emigrated from Medina to Iraq, Hadramaut, and then finally to Indonesia.

[7] Quraish Shihab is the forth son of Abdurrahman Shihab and Asma. His brothers and sisters are Nur, Ali, Umar, Wardah, Alwi, Nina, Nizar, Abdul Mutalib, Salwa, Ulfa and Latifah (Anwar et al. 2014:13).

Egyptian society. Consequently, with the inclusion of modern subjects like medicine, natural sciences, civil law, and English language and civilization in its curricula, al-Azhar became more integrated into a more profane sphere, not merely strict in religious knowledge (Skovgaard-Petersen 1997:186; Zeghal 1996:99–100). The success of al-Azhar reform in the 1960s marks the victory of reformist *ʿulamāʾ* who shared Muḥammad ʿAbduh's idea of al-Azhar institutional reform and religious reformism. This reform implies that these *ʿulamāʾ* became integrated to the state apparatus and stood as the leading representatives of a state Islam. Outstanding among these *ʿulamāʾ* were Maḥmūd Shaltūt (the Grand Sheikh of al-Azhar), Muḥammad al-Bāhī (the Director of al-Azhar), and Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Zayyāt (the Editor of al-Azhar Magazine) who had participated in drafting the new law (Lemke 1980:168; Skovgaard-Petersen 1997:184–85).[8] Thus, we can assume that discourses on reform and re-articulation of Islam with regard to the contemporary needs of Muslim society had become more familiar within the circle of al-Azhar since that time.

Quraish Shihab mentions that his greatest motivation to come to Cairo was to study Qur'anic exegesis at al-Azhar. He admits that this motivation came from his impression of his father's Qur'anic lectures during his childhood. Quraish did finish his secondary school at al-Azhar, but his proficiency in the Arabic language was seen as insufficient to be admitted to the department of Qur'anic exegesis at al-Azhar. Thus, he acknowledges that he had to wait another year to improve his proficiency in Arabic, although at that time he might have been able to continue his studies in other departments in other subjects (Shihab 2013b:19–20; Anwar et al. 2014:72).

What is interesting is that as a Hadrami descendant, Quraish Shihab was not sent by his family to Mecca or Hadramaut for his religious studies, especially given the fact that members of the Hadrami diaspora used to send their children to study under

[8] Following the showdown in 1954, the new government cracked down on the Muslim Brotherhood and discredited those *ʿulamāʾ* who had been closely connected with the King, mainly those traditional *ʿulamāʾ* or those belonging to some Sufi circles. The reform-minded *ʿulamāʾ* appeared a good match for the new regime, looking for support and legitimation for their reform plans of al-Azhar. They demonstrated willingness for international scholarly cooperation that well suited Nasser's foreign political policy (Skovgaard-Petersen 1997:182–83). Nasser made use of al-Azhar as his important political asset for his foreign policy, which in some extent successfully raised its international reputation. For example, Nasser's support to Sukarno's non-Bloc ideology involved the newly reformed al-Azhar in institutional relationships with the State Islamic University of Indonesia. In 1958, the popular Indonesian author, Hamka (1908-1981), was awarded an honorary degree from al-Azhar and in 1962, it was the Indonesian Islamic university's turn to confer the same degree to the Grand Shaikh of al-Azhar, Maḥmūd Shaltūt (Feener 2002:91).

the patronage of famous scholars in Mecca and Hadramaut (Abaza 1994:40; Kaptein 2014:5). This might be explained from the background of his family that showed much interest in religious reformism. His grandfather, Ali Shihab (1864-1915), had been involved in Jamʿiyyat al-Khair, a reform-oriented Arab social and educational organization based in Batavia – now Jakarta – since 1901.[9] His father, Abdurrahman, was educated at this institution. In his youth, Abdurrahman was willing to study religion in Cairo, but his parents would not allow it because he was the only son from a mother in Makassar.[10] For Quraish, his father was an open-minded person and much interested in ideas of renewal in religious thought and higher education. He used to advise his children to be a part of Indonesia and to fuse with Indonesian society. He also used to teach them religious knowledge, and later Quraish deeply recognized the reflections of the thoughts of the Muslim reformist scholars, such as Muḥammad ʿAbduh, Muhammad Iqbal and Abu al-A'la Maududi, that he had heard since his childhood (Anwar et al. 2014:15–20; Shihab 2013b:20).

In the 20th century, Cairo was seen by Indonesians as a new destination of knowledge that offered a cosmopolitan milieu and modern experience. For that reason, some Indonesian Hadrami families began to send their children to study religion in that city (Laffan 2003:127). In general, two types of Indonesian students can be classified: first, those who rarely attended classes, but wandered around and often got involved in mundane activities – even some spent long years in Cairo without finishing their studies[11]– and second, those who regularly went to the campus and

[9] Jamʿiyyat al-Khair is named as the first modern Islamic institution in Indonesia and was founded in 1901 by an Arab community in Batavia, but was officially acknowledged by the Dutch colonial government in 1905. Its founders were the newly emergent reformist Hadrami elite, primarily from the families of Shihāb and al-Mashhūr (Mobini-Kesheh 1999:36; Noer 1973:58). Students who studied at the institution had acquaintance with progressive ideas and Islamic movements. Some of them took part in the struggle to create Indonesian independence in 1945. This happened because the institution had close relationships with sources of Islamic reformism in the Middle East, particularly Egypt. It used to invite teachers from the Arab world to instruct the students about the proper teachings of Islam. A prominent reformist teacher from Sudan, Syaikh Aḥmad Sūrkatī (1872-1943), who was deeply influenced by the thoughts of Muḥammad ʿAbduh and Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, was also invited. He was an important figure of Islamic reformism in Indonesia and the founder of al-Irshād in 1915 after having dispute with the Arab *Sāda* of Jamʿiyyat al-Khair regarding the position of *Sāda* among non-*Sāda* Muslims (Abaza 1994:41, 54–5; Ricklefs 2001:215).

[10] Ali Shihab was polygamous. He had wives in Jakarta, Madura and Makassar (Anwar et al. 2014:12). See Alwi's testimony at *Lebaran Bersama Keluarga Shihab* (*ʿĪd al-Fiṭr* with the Shihab family) that aired on Metro TV on September 2, 2009 (accessed from YouTube on September 12, 2012).

[11] Students who went to Cairo regularly came from peasant areas. They were sometimes trapped with the allure of cosmopolitan Cairo. During their studies at al-Azhar, some even wandered to Saudi Arabia or European countries for travelling or doing part time jobs. The case of Abdurrahman Wahid (1940-2009) might be different. He never managed to finish his studies at the university. He was much more

finished their studies as it should be (Abaza 1996:32). Young Quraish belonged to the second category. He was a diligent student and passionate in reading Arabic literature, making clippings of interesting articles, and writing what passed in his mind,[12] but showed less interest in student activism. *Al-Khawāṭir* (contemplations), which was later translated into Indonesian as *Logika Agama, Kedudukan Wahyu dan Batas-batas Akal dalam Islam* (The Logic of Religion, the Position of Revelation and the Limits of Reason in Islam), was among Shihab's books written during his studies in Cairo. It was written in 1966 when he was a bachelor student at al-Azhar (Shihab 2005:16).[13]

During his studies at al-Azhar, Quraish Shihab lived in *Madīnat al-Buʿūth al-Islāmiyya*, a dormitory for International students (constructed from 1954 to 1959), which was conceived as a symbol of Nasser's increasing desire to internationalize al-Azhar (Abaza 1994:115). A small enrollment of international students at the time allowed young Shihab to make personal contacts with some Azhari *ʿulamāʾ* and professors. He acknowledges that he had a very close relationship with Syaikh ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (1910 – 1978) who was, at that time, the Dean of the Faculty of Theology and they had rich discussions on various religious topics. Shihab was impressed with Maḥmūd for the latter's ability to reconcile Islamic Sufism and rationalism (Anwar et al. 2014:71). The availability of abundant books in Cairo met up with Shihab's passion for reading. He had much interest in the writings of an Egyptian writer, ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād (1889 – 1964), whose works partly deal with Islam and the Qur'an. In 1967, Shihab completed his bachelor's degree in the field of *tafsīr* (Qur'anic Exegesis). Two years later, he obtained his master's in the same field with a thesis entitled *al-Iʿjāz al-Tashrīʿī li al-Qurʾān al-Karīm* (the Legal Inimitability of the Qur'an).

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interested in the intellectual atmosphere outside the campus, visiting the Egyptian National Library and many other western libraries in Cairo, and eager to go to cinemas (Abaza 1993:15–8).

[12] Because of his diligence and great passion in reading during his time as a student at al-Azhar, Quraish's younger brother, Alwi, often called him a nerd. Shihab's most interesting experience outside studying was probably his experience working at a steel factory in Allendorf, Germany, during summer holidays. It was Alwi who invited him to work there (Anwar et al. 2014:88–93). See also Alwi's testimony of his life experience with Quraish in Cairo. He used to borrow Quraish's notes when he was going to have exams. *Lebaran Bersama Keluarga Shihab* (*ʿĪd al-Fiṭr* with the Shihab family) aired on Metro TV on September 2, 2009 (accessed from YouTube on September 12, 2012).

[13] Interview with Muhammad Quraish Shihab on July 24, 2012.

Shihab was asked by his father, who was at the time the Rector of the State Islamic University (IAIN) of Alauddin, to return to Makassar. He was appointed as the Vice Rector for Academic and Student Affairs. Additionally, he was also entrusted with other positions, both academic such as the Coordinator of Private Higher Education in Eastern Indonesia, and non-academic such as the Assistant Police Chief of Eastern Indonesia in the field of mental development. He also had the opportunity to conduct some research and produced some papers, such as the "Implementation of Religious Harmonious Life in Eastern Indonesia" (1975) and the "Problems of Endowments in South Sulawesi" (1978).

Quraish Shihab married Fatmawati Assegaf from Surakarta in 1975 and has five children: Najeela, Najwa, Nasywa, Ahmad, and Nahla (Anwar et al. 2014:112, 133–34).[14] In 1980, he returned to Cairo to pursue his doctorate at al-Azhar. Two years later, he successfully defended his thesis *Naẓm al-Durar li al-Biqāʿī: Taḥqīq wa Dirāsa* (Studies and Investigation on *Naẓm al-Durar* of *al-Biqāʿī*) with the distinction *summa cum laude* (*mumtāz maʿa martabat al-sharaf al-ūlā*). The work of Biqāʿī would later constitute an important classical source for the foundation of Shihab's approach to the Qur'an, especially concerning the question of correspondence (*munāsabāt*) between Qur'anic verses.

With the invitation of Harun Nasution, a strong proponent of an Islamic rationalism, Quraish Shihab moved to Jakarta in 1984 and was assigned as a lecturer at State Islamic University (IAIN) of Jakarta. His move to the capital city marks the leap of his intellectual and public career. Gradually he became familiar among urban Muslims and state executives. He used to publish his articles on religious issues in some newspapers and magazines, as well as giving lectures on various religious topics. Organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, he used to deliver lectures at the Istiqlal Mosque[15] in front of state executives and certain segments of Jakartan Muslims.

[14] http://quraishshihab.com/profile/ accessed on November 6, 2014.

[15] The Istiqlal Mosque (taken from an Arabic word *istiqlāl*, meaning independence) is the national mosque of Indonesia, which was built to commemorate Indonesian independence. The mosque was built on the Wilhelmina Park, in which a Dutch citadel was located, to symbolize independence, and near the Jakarta Cathedral to symbolize religious harmony and tolerance. The foundation stone was laid by President Sukarno in 1961, and the mosque was officially inaugurated in 1978 by President Suharto. See: http://petabudaya.belajar.kemdikbud.go.id/nasional/istiqlal/ accessed on January 18, 2015.

In addition, he was entrusted to several positions; the co-chairperson of the Indonesian *'Ulamā'* Council (MUI) –founded by the New Order government in 1975 to unify and harmonize various Islamic organization into one single forum–, member of the Qur'an Supervision Committee at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, member of the Advisory Board of National Education, and the Assistant Chief of the Indonesian Muslim Intellectual Association. He was also appointed as the Rector of IAIN Jakarta for two periods (1992-1998), the Minister of Religious Affairs in 1998 during the last term of President Suharto's New Order period. Interestingly still, he used to deliver religious lectures in front of the members of Suharto's Cendana family, a fact that indicates the family's confidence on him in the religious field. From 1999 to 2002, he was appointed as the Indonesian Ambassador to Egypt and Djibouti in Cairo during which he had more opportunities to consult sources and successfully completed his *Magnum Opus*, *Tafsir al-Misbah*, a sequential verse-by-verse interpretation of the Qur'an.

Quraish Shihab's rising public career as a religious scholar during the authoritarian regime of Suharto cannot be separated from the fact that his articulations of religion did not oppose the policy of the government that sought to oppress any form of "political Islam", but significantly supported a form of Islam as a foundation of personal piety and civic pluralism (Hefner 2000:121–22; Liddle 1996:624). In this regard, Shihab might be seen by the government as one among those who were able to champion religion to take part in the developmentalist (*pembangunan*) project that the New Order government initiated.

After his retirement from the governmental positions, Shihab spent most of his time writing and giving lectures. He currently has written more than fifty books, which can be classified into four categories. The first are his books on Qur'anic exegesis, ranging from those that fit religiously educated readers, such as *Tafsir al-Misbah* and *Wawasan al-Qur'an* (Qur'anic Insights), to those written for average readers, such as *Tafsir al-Lubab* and *Secercah Cahaya Ilahi* (A Glimpse of Divine Light, 2000). The second are his books on methods and principles of interpretation, such as *Membumikan al-Qur'an* (Indigenizing the Qur'an) and *Kaidah Tafsir* (Principles of Interpretation) that have been widely circulated within the academic circle. The third are books on theological topics, such as Sunni-Syiah Bergandengan Tangan *Mungkinkah?* (Sunni-Shi'i hand in hand, is it possible?) and *Logika Agama* (The Logics

of Religion), which reflect Shihab's tendency toward reconciling Sunni-Shi'a and religion-reason relations. And the forth are books on his legal opinions, such as *Panduan Shalat bersama Quraish Shihab* (Prayer Guide with Quraish Shihab) and *Quraish Shihab Menjawab 1001 Soal Keislaman* (Quraish Shihab Answering 1001 Questions on Islam). His books of this type are written based on his responses to questions raised to him on various occasions. Some responses had been published in the daily national newspaper of *Republika* and an online media like www.detik.com.

In addition, Shihab becomes more seriously concerned with his cultural and intellectual project of "indigenizing the Qur'an within a pluralistic society" as an attempt to popularize and to actualize the Qur'anic teachings in a country with cultural and religious diversity. To sustain his ideal, he founded *Pusat Studi al-Qur'an* (Center for Qur'anic Studies) on September 18, 2004 as a center not only for defining strategies to popularize the Qur'anic teachings, but more importantly, for educating new generations of Qur'an exegetes, as well. Shihab is also Chairperson of the World Association for al-Azhar Graduates (WAAG) of Indonesian Branch, which was founded in 2010. Apart from maintaining alumni networks, the association has a mission to promote *wasaṭiyyat al-Islām* (Islamic moderation).[16] Moreover, he was also elected together with some international Muslim scholars as a member of a newly international Islamic body, namely the Muslim Council of Elders (*Majlis al-Ḥukamā'*), which was founded on July 19, 2014. The Council is headed by the Grand Sheikh of al-Azhar, Aḥmad al-Ṭayyib (b. 1946), and aims at promoting peace and opposing violence in the Islamic world and beyond.[17]

During Ramadan, Shihab appears on some national television programs, such as SCTV and RCTI, to deliver his *Kultum* (short sermon) on various topics. He was a host of *Lentera Hati* on Metro TV, in which he discussed several topics in the light of the Qur'an. The program was based on the so-called thematic interpretation of the Qur'an (*tafsīr mauḍū'ī*). In 2004, *Lentera hati* was then replaced by *Tafsir al-Misbah*, in

[16] The question of *wasaṭiyyat* was strongly emphasized in the second congress of the Indonesian WAAG on July 7, 2012 in Jakarta, *mina 'l-wasaṭiyya ilā 'l-khairiyya; muḥāwalat li-rasmi maʿālimi wasaṭiyyati 'l-Islām li-binā'i khairi umma ukhrijat li 'l-nās* (from moderation to virtue; an attempt to draw characteristics of Islamic moderation in order to create the best community born to humankind).

[17] See http://quraishshihab.com/majlis-al-hukama/ accessed on January 3, 2015; http://www.islamopediaonline.org/fatwa/muslim-council-elders and http://www.wam.ae/en/news/emirates-arab-international/1395267930951.html accessed on January 28, 2015.

which Shihab delivers his lecture mainly based on his sequential verse-by-verse interpretation of the Qur'an (*tafsīr taḥlīlī*) that is aired during Ramadan and Islamic holidays.

## Constructions of Quraish Shihab's Authority

One of the most perplexing questions faced by Muslims in any generation is the question of religious authority. Who has the right to speak for Islam? To what extent are individual scholars and preachers seen as authority in religion? What do religious institutions such as al-Azhar in Cairo, al-Zaitūna in Tunis and religious seminaries in the Muslim world play in the construction of one's religious authority? The notion of authority in Islam, as scholars have argued, cannot be easily defined for there is no such formal institutions of authority in Islam, and because the task for interpreting religion has become a contested arena among various contending authorities after the death of the Prophet Muhammad.

In general, the notion of religious authority is closely linked to the question of mastery of religious knowledge, which defines the parameters of Islamic tradition, "a set of ideas, symbols, and interrelated texts and practices which may have a normative (although contested) force" (Berkey 2001:7). This knowledge derives from the revealed texts and other texts that elucidate the meanings of the revealed texts. Accordingly, authority has a textual character, an issue that has been frequently attached to a social group of religious scholars (*'ulamā'*; see also Chapter 2). Following the expansion of the Islamic world and the growing number of Muslims, there have emerged communities of preachers who play an important role in a public moral exhortation. These preachers derive their knowledge from the works of the *'ulamā'*. They achieve considerable success in making close contact with the common people for their preaching at best can meet the emotional and intellectual conditions of most audiences.

Theoretically, preaching bridges the gap between scholars and the common people. Abū al-Faraj ibn al-Jauzī (d. 597/1200) praised the roles of preachers and storytellers in transmitting religious knowledge to the common people. As a result, "the common people benefit from them what they do not from a great scholar" (Jauzī 1988:176). However, preachers sometimes carry on the task of spreading reports and

tales of the prophets and pious forebears that do not always go in line with the scholarly tradition of the *ʿulamāʾ*. The absence of any sort of ecclesiastical structure in Islam leads to a certain flexibility in the definition of *ʿilm* (knowledge), a space in which preachers play some roles to establish their authority among the common people (Berkey 2001:71). There lies the question of what legitimate knowledge is and what constitutes legitimate knowledge.

For Indonesian Muslims, the traditional notion of religious authority was closely linked to the educational experience in *pesantren* or seminaries in Hijaz. Beginning from the 20th century, al-Azhar in Cairo has been considered as one of the most important destinations of religious learning for Indonesian students (Abaza 1994; Laffan 2003). Its importance lies not only in its old historical anchorage of Islamic learning, but also in its tenacious struggle in preserving and modifying Islamic religious intellectualism in the modern world. It should be noted that "an institutional anchorage is necessary for religious authorities to be durable and to be able to compete in a religious economy where the sphere of Muslim authorities has become highly fragmented" (Zeghal 2007:108). To support its proselytizing mission, al-Azhar develops alternative models and mechanism of religious authority that do not necessarily deviate from the tradition of the *ʿulamāʾ*. In this manner, al-Azhar devises its institutions to lend authority backings for its graduates who pursue their careers as *ʿulamāʾ* as well as preachers, despite fierce attacks from the Islamists regarding the political stance of its elites that affects the policy of al-Azhar institutionally.

For Quraish Shihab who was educated at al-Azhar from secondary school until doctorate, al-Azhar plays a major role in the construction of his authority. His family background of the *ʿAlawī Sāda* may play some role in this issue, but his deep involvement in various academic discussions and his interests in discourses about the renewal of religious thoughts suggest that the honorary title of *sayyid* or *ḥabīb* that he may enjoy does not play a significant role in the construction of his religious authority. In the Indonesian context, the title might form an authority for those who are concerned about securing and extending the importance of the ʿAlawī order (*ṭarīqa*) by emphasizing historical and spiritual connections between Hadrami saints both in Hadramaut and in the Indonesian archipelago, and their roles in the Islamization processes in the archipelago (Alatas 2011).

The *ʿAlawī Sāda* families are mostly Sunni Muslims, the followers of the Shāfiʿī School and the carriers of a Sufi order, *al-Ṭarīqa al-ʿAlawiyya*, which is a simple order that does not require seclusion (*khalwa*) for the purpose of spiritual exercises and does not denounce worldly activities (Alatas 1997:31). To a considerable extent, their rituals may be close to the religious tradition maintained by most members of the traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) – the followers of the Shāfiʿī School and Sufi practitioners. However, Quraish Shihab never establishes structural link or affiliates himself with NU, or with the modernist Muhammadiyah; both are two greatest Islamic organizations in Indonesia. If only he maintained affiliation with a reputed mass-based Islamic organization in Indonesia, the question of authority for a prominent scholar like him might not pose a big challenge. However, it seems that Quraish Shihab enjoys striving for his own religious and cultural projects that most likely attract the interests of open-minded, urban, and middle-class Muslims. True to his Azhari background, Shihab is a religious scholar who is also active in preaching activities as a means to channel the common people into the religious tradition of the *ʿulamāʾ*.

## An Overview of Previous Studies

Quraish Shihab, as well as his work, has been a subject of various studies for bachelor's, master's, and some doctoral theses at Indonesian – Islamic – universities. Most of the studies examine particular topics or concepts addressed by Shihab in his exegetical works and thence deduce the hermeneutical approaches employed by Shihab. In his doctoral thesis entitled *Penafsiran Ayat-ayat Jender dalam Tafsir al-Mishbah* (Interpretation of Gender-related Verses in *Tafsīr al-Miṣbāḥ*, 2006), Anshori highlights Shihab's interpretations of women-related verses and finds out that Shihab's conception of gender rests on the sex itself, or biological distinction between men and women. As Anshori argues, this biological distinction, in Shihab's view, implies different rights and obligations as stipulated in the Qur'an that apply universally. Anshori concludes that Shihab does not see gender as social and cultural interpretations of sex distinctions by a particular society (Anshori 2006:289).

Meanwhile, Badru Tamam's master's thesis *Corak Pemikiran Kalam Muhammad Quraish Shihab dalam Tafsir al-Mishbah* (Theological Thought of Muhammad Quraish Shihab in *Tafsīr al-Miṣbāḥ*, 2008) sheds light on the rational

tendency in Shihab's theological thoughts. He argues that this kind of rationality has precedents in the Muʿtazilī School. Tamam's argument is based on his assessment of Shihab's tendency towards a metaphorical interpretation of the anthropomorphist verses, his idea about the conformity of God's action with His custom (*sunnat Allāh*), and about human free will under the system determined by the divine custom (Tamam 2008:198–202). Yet, Tamam does not touch upon Quraish Shihab's encounter with the thoughts of Muḥammad ʿAbduh, who introduced a synthetic formulation of Muslim theology in the modern world that depicts Islam as a rational religion evident in his *Risālat al-Tauḥīḍ* (the Treaty of Unity) and *al-Islām wa al-Naṣrāniyya* (Islam and Christianity).

An interesting article entitled *Purposive Exegesis* by Muhammadiyah Amin and Kusmana examines a genre of *tafsīr* through which Quraish Shihab addresses purposively contemporary issues in the light of the Qur'an. This genre is based on what is called "thematic interpretation" (*al-tafsīr al-mauḍūʾī*), "an interpretation of the Qur'an based on a selected theme taken either from the Qur'an or from historical aspects of Muslim society referred to in the Qur'an" (Amin and Kusmana 2005:70). The authors argue that in this way, Shihab is working with two aspects of interpretation: objective and intentional. The first deals with the linguistic and historical analysis of the text, while the second is when the interpreter attempts to understand the current situation and relate it back to the Qur'anic text in order to meet the demands of the present audience (Amin and Kusmana 2005:72).

In the West, the study of Shihab's exegetical works is partly conducted by Johanna Pink in her comparative studies on contemporary Sunni commentaries (starting from the 1960s) in Egypt, Turkey, and Indonesia. In her *Sunnitischer Tafsīr in der modernen islamischen Welt* (Sunni Qur'anic Exegesis in the Modern Islamic World), Pink intentionally takes a different method from that commonly adopted by Western scholars who more eagerly discuss modern Qur'anic exegesis by referring exclusively to those modernist and Islamist exegetical works. Pink includes what she calls 'mainstream' commentaries under her investigation in order to comprehend the mechanism and condition in which the production and reproduction of knowledge occur in the Muslim world. She argues that only when the whole range of contemporary Muslim commentaries are put under investigation can the importance of Islamist and reformist exegesis be properly assessed (Pink 2011:8).

With regard to Shihab's *Tafsir al-Misbah*, Pink views that although Shihab refers to new hermeneutical approaches like Fazlur Rahman's in the foreword, he shows little interest in the use of such method; he shows less interest in discussing the Qur'anic text in in its historical context than in its linguistic details (Pink 2011:75). One of the most important aspects of Shihab's interpretation that Pink points out is that Shihab is the only exegete – among other exegetes under her investigation – who offers a solution for the Muslim dilemma regarding the theology of religious pluralism. She highlights Shihab's egalitarian thought that confirms all religions are equally true with a reference to the differences in their own teachings. Shihab believes that his religion is true, but at the same time, he recognizes that other religions are true according to their own adherents (Pink 2011:267–68). Pink categorizes Shihab as a modernist exegete – with some restrictions – by considering his strong reception to reformist ideas, conciliatory attitudes toward non-Muslims, and a certain openness to Judeo-Christian sources (Pink 2011:312).

Most of the studies on Quraish Shihab only deal with a particular aspect of his work: his method of interpretation, his theological or legal thoughts, or his Qur'an-based response to particular issues. None of the studies, to the best of my knowledge, touches upon the greater picture of the Quraish Shihab who works toward an intellectual and cultural project of "making the Qur'an down-to-earth". This study is an attempt to address this point by putting Shihab's Qur'an-based staging virtues in the framework of Islamic religious reformism and contestation over religious authority in modern Indonesia.

## Theoretical Framework

In the modern age, Muslim scholars have been occupied with the question of actualizing Islam in the new changing context. Quraish Shihab introduces the jargon of "making the Qur'an down-to-earth" (*membumikan al-Qur'an*) mainly as a response to the contemporary challenges in Muslim society. By this term, he means that the foundational and most privileged text of Islam has to function as the premier inspirational guidance for contemporary life in Muslim society, and therefore, it needs to be articulated in a way that greatly corresponds to the realities currently experienced by Muslim society (Shihab 2013b:134). The notion of *membumikan*, as Shihab singles out, also makes the presumption as if all this time the Qur'an had

existed somewhere in the sky, placed at a distance from the real Muslim life. It presumes that in the face of massive and unrelenting changes in the modern world, the Qur'an has become a mere relic of the past which has little significance in the contemporary life of Muslims, except probably for the spiritual pursuit.

Shihab's call for the primacy of the Qur'an in Muslim religious life must be understood as part of a common phenomenon in the Muslim world in the 20th century when Muslims believed that the task of the reinterpretation of Islam has to begin with its most fundamental source (Mir 1993:218). The Qur'an, indeed, has always been regarded as the primary source of Islam, but scholars bearing the spirit of reform viewed that the Qur'an had been surrounded by obsolete interpretations of the past that showed little relevance to the contemporary challenges for Muslim society (Riḍā 1947:25–6). Thus, there have been growing opinions to let the Qur'an "speak for itself" in the light of the new context, but without drastically breaking from the interpretative precedents of the past.

Classical Qur'anic commentary, as Walid Waleh argues, is a "genealogical tradition" where each new exegetical work provides a survey and reproduction of the previous interpretations. A commentator might disagree with the interpretations of the predecessors, but he would never dismiss their interpretations outright. The formative power of previous interpretations is not deniable, but it is not inescapable. Thus, a new commentator would prefer to add his opinion to the pool of the inherited interpretations (McAuliffe 1991:291–92; Saleh 2004:14). This tradition, as Johanna Pink argues, continues until this day with the widening pool of interpretations that includes modern reformist interpretations apart from pre-modern ones (Pink 2011:288–90, n.d.:1). The uniqueness of each exegete can be seen from his particular emphasis on some aspects of the tradition and his exclusion of others.

It should be borne in mind that any kind of text is itself silent; it always needs a person to speak on its behalf. The person at stake is always influenced by the political, social, and intellectual contexts of his time when dealing with the text. This is actually a portrait of what has been done by Muslim exegetes throughout history. From the part of an exegete, interpretation is understood as an attempt to extend the meanings of the Qur'an in order for it to be able to correspond to the realities of the present time. Thus, in its essence, Qur'anic exegesis is an exegete's attempt to relate

his world to the world of the Qur'an (Bauer 2013:8), because it always involves a process of meaning-creation or drawing "significance", which is not explicitly mentioned in the text.

Starting from the consideration that interpretation needs objective validity, Eric Donald Hirsch (b. 1928), an American linguist, argues against the doctrine that the meaning of literary texts is independent from the author's will. He therefore proposes the opposite thesis that the meaning of a text is whatever its author has willed to convey by means of a particular sequence of linguistic signs (Hirsch 1967:31). On this basis, Hirsch makes a distinction between what he calls "meaning" and "significance". To him, *meaning* is what represented by the text or what the author has meant by his use of a particular sign sequence. On the other hand, *significance* designates "a relationship between that meaning and a person, or a conception, or a situation, or indeed anything imaginable" (Hirsch 1967:8). In this regard, meaning is relatively stable and unchanging, while significance may change significantly as historical circumstances shift. Such a distinction can also be traced back to a German philosopher, Gottlob Frege (1848-1925), who published his article in 1892 entitled *Über Sinn und Bedeutung* (About Sense and Meaning). *Meaning*, according to him, is a representation of a definite object, while *sense* designates understanding of a sign with regard to a particular concept and relation (Frege 1892:27).

Most Muslim scholars do not indicate a clear distinction between the so-called meaning and significance when interpreting the Qur'anic text. Many tend to include both in the generic category of meaning. There are some Muslim scholars who highlight the existence of two entities in the process of interpretation: the meaning of the Qur'an to its original audience and its significance to the present audience, and therefore propose hermeneutics to correlate both. A British India-born Muslim thinker, Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988) proposes a double-movement method of interpretation, from the present situation to the Qur'anic times, then back to the present. The first movement is to examine the specifics of the Qur'an in order to elicit and systematize its general principles, values and long-range objectives, while the second is to embody these general principles and values in the present concrete social-historical contexts (Rahman 1984:7–8).

Meanwhile, referring to the distinction as advanced by Hirsch, an Egyptian scholar of the Qur'an, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (1943-2010), views it necessary to take into account "meaning" (*maʿnā*) and "significance" (*maghzā*) when reading a religious text. According to him, *maʿnā* can be discovered through a deep analysis of the construction of the text and its social historical context. On the other hand, *maghzā* is a result of present reading based on comprehension and examination of *maʿnā.* In this regard, *maʿnā* is relatively stable, while *maghzā* is dynamic depending on reading horizons (Abu Zayd 1994:142–43, 221). Abu Zayd argues that *maghzā* must be derived from *maʿnā*, because if not, it is called "staining" (*talwīn*), instead of "interpretation" (*taʾwīl*). According to him, *maghzā* is determined through what he calls "analogy of movement" (*qiyās al-ḥaraka*). If analogy that is commonly employed by traditional Muslim jurists rests on what is called the "effective cause" (*ʿilla*), which resides in the text itself or stems from jurists' opinion, in order to produce a judgment for a new case, the analogy of movement rests on the "direction" (*ittijāh*) which can be discovered from the text by analyzing both its linguistic and structural construction, as well as its social and historical contexts. *Maghzā,* therefore, is acquired by relating the "direction" intended in the text and the direction intended in the present context (Abu Zayd 1994:222).

Quraish Shihab does not employ specific terms to differentiate between the two aspects of understanding attached to the Qur'anic text in the act of interpretation. In general, he tends to put all these aspects under the generic term of "meaning". Indeed, he sometimes uses specific terms that indicate toward a notion of basic and semantic meanings when dealing with Qur'anic vocabulary. Yet, it is used to distinguish between the original meaning (*makna dasar*) of a word and the new semantic meaning (*makna semantik*) when the word at stake is put in the structure of the text. Meanwhile, in order to describe the significance of the Qur'anic text for the contemporary context, he frequently uses the term *pesan* (message). And in order to draw the significance of the Qur'anic text in the present context, Shihab employs "interest-based analogy" (Shihab 2013b:135–36), a mechanism of embodiment of the general principles and values derived from the Qur'an in the new context by considering what constitutes the public interest (*maṣlaḥa*) of the present Muslim society.

*Maṣlaḥa* is a traditional concept of legal reasoning which has been subject to criticism for the lack of explicit basis from the revealed texts. It was put into marginal importance of authority in the pre-modern period, especially after the theory of "four sources" (the Qur'an, the *Sunna*, *ijmāʿ* or consensus, and *qiyās* or analogy), which was originally introduced by al-Imām al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820), came to dominate Islamic legal discourse (Masud 2009b:128). *Maṣlaḥa* was classified by the Shāfiʿī jurists into three categories: *maṣlaḥa muʿtabara,* which is endorsed by the text, *maṣlaḥa mulghā*, which is rejected by the text, and *maṣlaḥa mursala*, which is neither endorsed nor rejected by the text. Of the three, only the first is considered valid, while the third has to be further examined from the point of view of its grades: *ḍarūrāt* (necessities), *ḥājāt* (needs), *taḥsīnāt* (refinements). Of these, only *ḍarūrāt*-based *maṣlaḥa* is valid, while the other two are not accepted, if they are not supported by specific textual evidence. On this basis, the Shāfiʿī jurists reject *maṣlaḥa* as an independent source or principle of law, subjecting it to scrutiny on the basis of the revealed texts and making it subordinate to *qiyās* ( analogy; Masud 2009b:128, 142).

A radical shift regarding the conception of *maṣlaḥa* was raised by a Ḥanbalī jurist, Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī (d. 716/1316), who stressed *maṣlaḥa* as the basic and overriding principle of *sharīʿa*, justifying it even to the extent of setting aside the revealed text. However, al-Ṭūfī, in his final analysis, regarded *maṣlaḥa* as still in the perspective of the "traditional four sources" where recourse to it was necessary only after those four sources had failed (Masud 2009b:149–50). It was Abū Isḥāq al-Shāṭibī (d. 790/1388) who conceptualized *maṣlaḥa* as an independent principle of legal reasoning in the true sense of meaning. By *maṣlaḥa* he means "that which affects the sustainability of human life, the perfection of man's livelihood, and the acquisition of what his emotional and intellectual qualities require of him in an absolute sense" (Shāṭibī n.d.:II,25). In his view, God instituted the *sharīʿa* in order to maintain the good of the people; the obligations in the *sharīʿa* aims at the protection of the purposes of religion which, in its turn, aims to protect the good of the people (Masud 2009b:151). Unlike al-Ṭūfī, al-Shāṭibī does not treat *maṣlaḥa* in the framework of the four sources theory. His conception of the sources of law is limited to the Qur'an and the *Sunna* (Masud 2009b:161), while *maṣlaḥa* constitutes an operating principle to understand obligations in the revealed texts.

*Maṣlaḥa* as an independent principle reverberates in the modern age as a principle of adaptability in the face of social and political changes. *Maṣlaḥa,* as such, has been widely employed by utilitarianist Muslim scholars affiliated in one way or another with the reformist school of Muḥammad ʿAbduh (Hallaq 1997; Masud 2009b). In 1899 in his speech on the reform of religious courts, ʿAbduh (1949-1905) advocated the use of *maṣlaḥa* as a guiding principle in law making. He stressed that in contracts and transactions "the consideration rests on the purposes and essences, not on the texts and wordings" (ʿAbduh 1899:761). He used to recommend that his colleagues and students read al-Shatibi's *al-Muwāfaqāt* for the purpose of understanding the relevant philosophy of Islamic law making (Khuḍarī Bik 1969:13). Within the circle of al-Azhar where Quraish Shihab studied religion, it was Maḥmūd Shaltūt who explicitly introduced the sources of law that were in line with those of al-Shāṭibī: the Qur'an, the Sunna, and reason (*raʾy*) in which *maṣlaḥa* forms the overriding operative principle.[18] In this regard, guidance-oriented and interest-based approaches to the Qur'an would be best analyzed from this context.

To put the discussion in Indonesia's twentieth-century context, working on the Qur'an was mostly identical with reformist Muslim scholars who viewed the necessity of understanding Islam from its revealed text. Before the 1920s, there was a sort of consensus that maintained that the Qur'an was only in Arabic and, accordingly, its translation into any other language was regarded as not permissible.[19] Reform-leaning scholars challenged the consensus by producing translations which ultimately resulted in a 'new consensus' that seemed to serve the interests of both reformists and traditionalists; the Arabic text was placed first, then followed by the translation, which was labeled as an 'explanation' (Federspiel 1991:151). Although Qur'anic commentary did not pose controversy like Qur'an translation, it did not constitute a major intellectual pursuit of Indonesian traditionalist scholars who were much more interested in the scholastic discourse of Islamic jurisprudence, theology, and Sufism. Until the first half of the 20th century, the Qur'an had rarely been studied directly, but

[18] See Maḥmūd Shaltūt's *al-Islām ʿAqīda wa Sharīʿa.*

[19] The Dutch-allied *Muftī* of Batavia, Sayyid ʿUthmān (1822-1913), published a booklet in 1909 entitled *Ḥukm al-Raḥmān bi al-Nahy ʿan Tarjamat al-Qurʾān* (The Judgment of the Merciful on the Prohibition of Translating the Qur'an) as a response to Bagus Ngarpah, the head teacher of *Madrasa Manbaʾ al-ʿUlūm* in Surakarta, who started to produce a Javanese translation of the Qur'an in the end of 1907. ʿUthmān advocated the prohibition of translating the Qur'an based on the traditional argument that the Arabic Qur'an could not be rendered adequately into any other language (Kaptein 2014:198–200).

mostly in the mediated form of the studies of works on jurisprudence and theology. In recent decades, there has been a growing interest in studying Qur'an commentary in the traditional milieu of *pesantren*, but still the main emphasis in instruction remains on Islamic jurisprudence (Bruinessen 1990:229).

In Indonesia's post-colonial period, new concepts, articulations, and understandings of Islam have been introduced to respond to the social and political contexts of the Indonesian nation-state. Nurcholish Madjid (1939-2005), who felt at home in a modern, urban, and middle-class milieu, was very much concerned with an idea of making Islam compatible with the modern and Indonesian contexts, meaning that Islam has to be part of and play a significant role in the modernization processes and the construction of Indonesian-ness. Thus, Madjid made an explicit call for 'modernization' of religious thought, by which he meant rationalization, as espoused by the divine imperative in the revealed texts and sustained by moral dimensions of belief in One God. At the same time, however, he denied an exclusive association of modernization with Westernization which, according to him, formed a total way of life where secularism with all its ramifications constituted the most important element (Madjid 2008:187). [20] Modernization, in Madjid's conception, implies overhauling the old, irrational mindset and working procedures and replacing them with new, rational ones. Modernization necessitates action based on human knowledge of 'natural' laws (*sunnatullāh*; Madjid 2008:180–82).

Madjid, who in his youth was involved in the hurly-burly of national politics in the 1960s and 1970s, offered an answer for an unresolved question regarding religion and nationalism; between devotion to Islam as the universal bond of Muslims on the one hand, and to Indonesia as a national bond, on the other hand. In doing so, he affirmed the central position of Islam within the construction of the Indonesian state; Islam had been an integral part of Indonesia for centuries, and was consistently employed as a rallying cry against colonialism (Burhani 2013:36). At the same time, he highlighted the fate of Indonesia as a nation with huge cultural diversity which, in order to bring fortune, needed what he called "cross-cultural fertilization" (Madjid 2004:8), a process of mutual understanding and respect among various ethnic groups

[20] For Madjid's explicit rejection of secularism, see Chapter "*Sekularisasi Ditinjau Kembali*" (Secularization Revisited) in Madjid's (2008) *Islam, Kemodernan dan Keindonesiaan* (Islam, Modernity and Indonesian-ness).

and religions. The spirit toward this end, according to him, is manifest primarily in the national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) and the state ideology of *Pancasila* (the Five Principles), which was formulated in line with Islamic tenets in one way or another (Madjid 1994:57–8). On this basis, Madjid argued that there was no argument to confront devotion to Islam and Indonesia.

Meanwhile, Abdurrahman Wahid (1940-2009), who was born into a family of Nahdlatul Ulama's leaders and maintained considerable contact with the rural world of *pesantren*, was a strong advocate for the idea of *pribumisasi Islam* (indigenizing Islam), or the manifestation of Islam in a local context. Writing in *Tempo* Magazine on July 16, 1983 an article entitled *Salahkah Jika Dipribumikan*? (Is it wrong to indigenize [Islam]?), Wahid highlighted a recent phenomenon of 'Arabization' in Indonesian society that attempted to revoke different manifestations of Islam from local culture. Wahid observed the popular use of Arabic terms such as *shalat* (Ar. *ṣalā*; prayer), *mushalla* (Ar. *muṣallā*; a place of worship), *milad* (Ar. *mīlād*; birthday) and *ustadz* (Ar. *ustādh*; master) that were to replace, significantly, the indigenous terms *sembahyang*, *langgar* or *surau*, *ulang tahun* and *tuan guru* or *kyai* respectively. According to him, nothing is wrong with indigenizing the religious life of Muslims because what matters in Islam is the originality of the doctrines of belief and principle observances.[21] In his view, 'Arabization' and the 'formalization' of Islam are expressions of inferiority by some Indonesian Muslims in the face of Western development and with respect to their own identity as Muslims (Anwar 2006:xxxix; Burhani 2013:28). In this sense, *pribumisasi Islam* is an attempt from the part of Wahid to confirm and defend the orthodoxy of local manifestations of Islam. It is also a critique of early American and Dutch scholars and Islamists who argued that Islam in Indonesia loosely corresponds with High Islam (Burhani 2013:28); normative teachings of Islam as assumed to have been practiced in the center of the Islamic world.

Quraish Shihab's "indigenizing the Qur'an" is more or less the same attempt to make Islam compatible within the modern context of Indonesian society by putting the Qur'an as its center of discourse. It recasts traditional devices in certain ways to present religion as a dynamic entity that is able to correspond to the notions of public interest sought in the modern context of Muslim society. This study argues that

[21] For further reading of Wahid's article, see http://gusdurnet.tripod.com/klasik/83/830716ag.htm accessed on January 9, 2015.

Quraish Shihab works in line with the spirit of Islamic religious reformism, for his re-centering of the revealed text in religious discourse corroborates a unique phenomenon of reform in the modern Islamic world. It also argues that approaches to the revealed text that feature a dynamic character of Islam will be central to his articulation of religion.

## Research Methods and Structure

This research is a qualitative examination that combines library research and interview-based investigation. The library research is conducted to examine the primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are those works written by Quraish Shihab, particularly on Qur'anic exegesis, methods and principles of Qur'an interpretation, and legal issues. The primary sources are used to delve into Shihab's religious thoughts: his approach to the Qur'an and other religious texts, his position with regard to Islamic intellectual legacy, and his response to some contemporary issues. Meanwhile, the secondary sources provide important tools to read and analyze Quraish Shihab as a Muslim religious scholar who spent a lot of time studying Islam at al-Azhar and then pursued an intellectual and public career in Indonesia, as well as to investigate the construction and position of his religious thought within the modern context of Indonesia.

This study is an intellectual history that seeks to examine major ideas of a prominent figure. Some information central to the research cannot be found in written sources. Literature-based research, therefore, is supported by field and interview-based investigations in order to explore primarily Quraish Shihab's more recent intellectual and cultural projects, especially after the establishment of Center for Qur'anic Studies (*Pusat Studi al-Qur'an*, PSQ) in 2004 and his public appearances on some national television channels during Ramadan and Islamic holidays. Fieldtrips were conducted twice. The first was intended to delve into preliminary information about Shihab's PSQ and appearance on television. It was conducted in July and August 2012 and coincided with the month of Ramadan, during which Shihab appeared on television. It also coincided with the second congress of the Indonesian Branch of the World Association for al-Azhar Graduates in which Quraish Shihab called the audience to discuss the idea of *wasaṭiyyat al-Islām* (Islamic moderation) that became Shihab's avowed basis of religious thought. The second trip was conducted from February to

mid-March 2014 that coincided with the "International Conference on Qur'anic Studies" held by Shihab's PSQ. It was intended to seek further clarification of my reading and to delve into new information about the developments of PSQ's projects.

For interviews, I made a list of persons from whom I expected to inquire about some relevant information and prepared a set of questions, thereof. The questions in the interview were structured by considering the background and capacity of the interviewees. Sometimes interviews took the shape of personal conversation, especially with those participants of the programs organized by Shihab's PSQ. On some occasions, interviews were conducted via email or telephone when accomplishing physical meetings were not possible during my field research and when new questions came up that needed further clarification after the fieldtrips. Moreover, this research also harnesses Shihab's lectures and speeches, which mainly can be accessed from YouTube and Metro TV's website, as part of the observation.

This dissertation is organized as follows. The introduction provides a general overview of the historical context in which Quraish Shihab arose as a prominent exegete by locating attempts toward rearticulating and refashioning Islam in the modern Indonesian context. It also presents the theoretical framework used in this writing and explains methods of research, sources, and structure of the dissertation. Chapter 1 examines Shihab's hermeneutical approach to the Qur'an. It sheds light on his theoretical basis for a quest of the meaning of the Qur'an in the modern age, filling the gap between the Qur'an as a fixed text revealed in the context of the Prophet Muhammad's Arab time with the constantly changing and differing realities experienced by Muslim society. Shihab's response to the modern question pertinent to the new Western-inspired approaches to the Qur'an is also discussed here.

In many regions of the Muslim world, such as in Indonesia, Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) represents Islamic science par excellence for it contains the most concrete implications for the everyday behavior of Muslims. Chapter 2 discusses Shihab's legal thoughts. It investigates how he derives Islamic legal judgments (*aḥkām*) through analyzing his interpretation of Qur'anic legal-related verses and *fatāwā* (legal pronouncements), despite the fact that he was not professionally trained in the field of *fiqh.* The chapter also examines a notion of authority that helps us understand the position of Shihab in the field of legal issues. Chapter 3 focuses on

Qur'anic interpretation in an era of the nation-state. It highlights some fundamental issues pertinent to the construction of the Indonesian state and how Shihab, through Qur'anic exegesis, addresses these issues in order to affirm that Islam is compatible with the idea of the Indonesian state.

Chapter 4 discusses the appearance of Quraish Shihab as a religious public intellectual who has maintained his considerable presence in recent decades in a secular and capitalized sphere created by television media. More specifically, the chapter describes the nature of this new public sphere, what makes the appearance of Shihab with his staging of religious virtues become possible, and how he has to deliver religious issues outside the 'official' habitat of Islamic learning. Finally, Chapter 5 highlights Shihab's expanding project of "making the Qur'an down-to-earth" through establishing an institution of the Qur'an, namely the Center for Qur'anic studies. It explores the role of the institution in educating young, recruited students to be future exegetes, eventually taking the responsibility of what Shihab is doing now. It also examines the potential of the institution to be a hub of a Qur'an-based intellectual movement, given the fact that it organizes systematic programs that lead to a collaborative action.

## Chapter 1

# Quraish Shihab's Hermeneutical Approach to the Qur'an

Qur'anic exegesis has become the most important field through which Quraish Shihab emerged and contributes to by giving an articulation of religion with regard to the contemporary challenges in Muslim society. In our attempt to examine Shihab's hermeneutical approach to the Qur'an, one might be impressed with his declarative statement about the necessity of reform in religious understanding and his fidelity to working within both the Islamic religious and intellectual traditions. An obvious reason for this characteristic might be traced to his educational background at the newly reformed al-Azhar, whose leading figures actively proposed 'moderate' Islamic reforms (Skovgaard-Petersen 1997), and his living experience in Cairo, which for Indonesian students offered a metropolitan atmosphere, an intersection between the Islamic and Western worlds, and a blended arena between traditionalist and modernist Muslims. Though very much concerned with a new articulation of Qur'anic messages, Shihab is apparently confined by the heavy weight of the traditional corpus *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān* (the sciences of the Qur'an) that became the primary reference of Qur'an interpretation within the Azhar circle. Nevertheless, innovations have to be credited to him, as well, for he is able to recast the interpretative legacy of his predecessors to introduce a sort of creative hermeneutics.

This chapter discusses Quraish Shihab's approach to the Qur'an by pointing out what I call "creative hermeneutics".[22] It is an interpretive attempt that seeks to bridge the gap between the revealed religious text, which initially addressed the conditions of the seventh-century Arab society, and the contemporary challenges in Muslim society by avoiding sharp breaks with traditional interpretative formulas and elaborating on novelties according to the rationales of God's rules that are to be sought from the inner structure of the Qur'an. In other words, such an approach attempts to brilliantly maintain a balance between continuity and change in the

[22] I borrow the term from Peter Heath who uses it in his study on hermeneutic techniques employed by Abū Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/922), Abū ʿAlī Ḥusain ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037), and Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 638/1240). For further reading, see Heath's (1989) *Creative Hermeneutics: A Comparative Analysis of Three Islamic Approaches*.

Muslim exegetical tradition. It has been widely understood that Muslim society in the modern, globalized world has been exposed to rapid changes and developments. What is interesting from Shihab is that he intentionally orients his interpretation of the Qur'an by reconciling religion with the developments of his era: accelerating religion with an increasingly dynamic life, valuing differences, and harmonizing religion with the scientific age.

## Privileging the Qur'anic Text

The main reason that encourages Muslim exegetes to pay serious attention to the Qur'an is a belief that it constitutes the *ipsissima verba dei* (the precise words of God) revealed to the chosen infallible Prophet Muhammad (d. 11/632). This divine origin generates a sense of holiness that makes Muslims treat the text in a very cautious way. Every single word is divinely chosen, and thereby, must contain a particular message. From this holy status, the Qur'an emerges as the most privileged text of Islam.

It is not unusual that a religion assigns privileged status to a text. One text may share some topical resemblance and meanings with other texts, but it has, for sure, a distinct religious significance for its adherents. Privileging texts, Peter Heath argues, is a social construction; "it is society that determines textual hierarchies" (Heath 1989:177). The emergence of the Qur'an in seventh-century Arabia provoked radical changes in its textual hierarchy. For early Muslims, the Qur'an dismissed any pre-Islamic, Arab, pagan texts that may have existed and had relegated the prevalent religious texts at the time – the Torah and the Gospels – into positions of marginal importance (Heath 1989:177). For early Muslims, the Qur'an surpassed the existing texts not only for its religious mission, but also for its remarkable literary quality and powerful psychological impacts to its audiences.[23]

[23] An Egyptian scholar of the Qur'an, Muḥammad Aḥmad Khalafallāh (1916-1991), addresses this issue in his book *al-Fann al-Qaṣaṣī fī al-Qurʾān al-Karīm* (The Art of Qur'anic Narratives), which was initially his Ph.D. thesis submitted to the Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Cairo University, but was rejected by the examiners' committee for it was deemed to have contained 'unorthodox' findings. Khalafallāh employs a literary approach, as proposed by Amīn al-Khūlī (d. 1967), to study Qur'anic narrative. The approach suggests that the interpreter should also try to explain the psychological effects of the artistic qualities of the Qur'anic text and to be psychologically effective, the Qur'anic narratives need not absolutely correspond to historical facts (Wielandt 2002:132–33).

In the following developments as Islam became an established religion, the Qur'an secured its position as the most privileged text in Islam. It became the divinely paradigmatic text (Messick 1996) and the pivotal text (Abu Zayd 1990) around which humanly religious texts were inherently produced throughout Islamic history. Poetry and other literary works that once flourished in the post-Qur'anic period never again competed with the ultimate authority of the Qur'an.

In the Muslim scholarly discourse of the Qur'an, the privileged status of the Qur'an is espoused with the theological doctrine of *iʿjāz* (the miraculous nature of the Qur'an). This doctrine affirms that this Muslim Holy Book is unsurpassable, both in its impressive rhetorical style, as well as in its illuminating content. The Muslim intellectual discourse on *iʿjāz* goes around its peculiar character, which not only distinguishes the Qur'an from other texts, but also highlights its superiority over all human texts of its kind (Abu Zayd 1990:155). ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), a Muslim historian and historiographer, states that the greatest, noblest, and clearest miracle is the meanings (*dalālāt*) of the Qur'an. The Qur'an came as a self-claimed revelation and it is itself a wonderful miracle. Unlike other prophetic miracles, it does not require any outside proof (ibn Khaldūn 2005:151). Additionally, the doctrine of *ʾiʿjāz* is sanctioned with the perception of the supremacy of the Arabic language. ʿAmr ibn al-Baḥr al-Jāhiẓ (d. 255/869), a Mu'tazilite author of works of literature, was among the strongest advocates of Arabic eloquence in his time. He argued that the Arabs prevailed over people of other languages (Jāhiẓ 1965:VII,214). Unlike other languages, which need a process of immense meditation and long exercises in the mind, Arabic is deemed superior for its spontaneous and quasi-inspired nature (Colombo 2011:3). The divine origin and the supreme literary quality of the Qur'an require pertinence in interpretation. Every word and structure must bear a particular meaning; "the more privileged and prestigious the text, the more important each word" (Heath 1989:182).

As a theologian, Quraish Shihab definitely affirms the outstanding literary quality and superiority of the Qur'an over other texts. He calls the Qur'an "*bacaan sempurna*" (the perfect reading) that has stunned humans with its eloquent expression, its harmonious structure, its choice of vocabulary, and its rich guidance (Shihab 2013c:115–58, 2014b:3–4). For Muslims, this conception inspires both a sense

of beauty and majesty.[24] Like other Muslim theologians, Shihab contends that the doctrine of *iʿjāz* not only confirms the truth about Muhammad's mission but also sanctions the divine origin of the Qur'an (Shihab 2013b:37); its *iʿjāz* is self-evident and it does not need other external evidence to prove its authenticity. In general, Shihab views that the Qur'an's *iʿjāz* is apparent from the congeniality of its vocabulary, its information about the unseen (*ghaib*), and its covering of some scientific annunciations (Shihab 2013b:40–4). Importantly still, the very character of its *iʿjāz*, Shihab affirms, rests in its challenge (*taḥaddī*) to humans to create a text of its kind, or just a chapter of its kind (Shihab 2013c:46–8).

In Islamic religious tradition, the Qur'an remains the most privileged text, even over the *Sunna* (the Prophetic tradition),[25] which in the Muslim conception is believed to have originated from revelation, as well. Shihab contends that the Qur'an is more superior not only because it has been verbally revealed to the Prophet, but also because it has the decisive status of authenticity (*qaṭʿī al-wurūd*). Muslim religious scholars believe that the Qur'an had been transmitted by a large number of Muslims in successive generations whose agreement upon a lie is inconceivable (*tawātur*).[26] So, it differs from the *Sunna* whose authenticity is merely speculative (*ẓannī al-wurūd*), meaning that most reports of the *Sunna* are not transmitted in the *tawātur* way. Moreover, Shihab observes that most of the *Sunna* may not represent, word by word, the original redaction of the Prophet's sayings (Shihab 2013b:188) because it had been transmitted by its content. With such an argument, Shihab assures that the Qur'an, as Muslims read today, does not deviate at all from the

[24] The roots of the *iʿjāz* doctrine, as Fazlur Rahman (1988:23–4) suggests, can be comprehended from the fact that the Qur'an is revealed in Arabic and declares itself as an "Arabic Qur'an" (*Qurʾān ʿarabī*). Culturally the doctrine emerged from a common assumption that pre-Islamic Arabs were very proud of the expressive quality of their language. Thus the word *al-ʿarab* in the Arabian cultural perspective is often explained as those who could convey their purposes with "eloquent expression" or "effective oral communication", while the word *al-ʿajam* –its antonym, non-Arabs– was understood by the Arabs as those who could not express their purposes eloquently. Taking this into account, across time and space Muslim scholars have taken seriously that what is called the Qur'an is that book in Arabic, and thereby, dismiss any label of it from any kind of its translation in other languages.

[25] The term *Sunna* is frequently used to designate the Prophet's sayings, actions and agreements upon his companions' actions.

[26] Such notion of authenticity has been severely challenged by particularly Western 'revisionist' scholars of the Qur'an who doubt the origin of the Qur'an as dated back to the era of the Prophet Muhammad. The main thrust of the revisionist studies is to contest the validity of the traditional Muslim accounts of the origin of the Qur'an and to place it in a more recent time (Sinai and Neuwirth 2010). Such revisionist perspective cannot be accepted by Muslim theologians, for it would deconstruct the very Muslim basis of the Qur'an's origin.

original version in the Prophet's time (Shihab 2013b:196) and thereby, it constitutes the most privileged and most authoritative text in Islam.

The notion of privileging the Qur'an has a consequence in terms of orienting Muslim perceptions on what other texts mean. The position of ultimate authority awarded to the Qur'an necessitates that other texts, including the *Sunna*, have to be understood within the frame of reference the Qur'an creates (Heath 1989:178). In relation to the Qur'an, Shihab views that the *Sunna* basically has two functions: either as confirmation (*bayān taʾkīd*) or explanation (*bayān tafsīr*). He addresses a question of whether the *Sunna* can enact a new ruling independent from the Qur'an. In this respect, he observes, Muslim scholars are divided in two communities. The first view the possibility of the Prophet to enact a ruling independent from the Qur'an based on a belief in the infallibility of the Prophet (*ʿiṣma*). On the other hand, the second community argues that God is the only source of religious rulings in Islam, and accordingly, the Prophet must have referred to God when enacting his rulings (Shihab 2013b:189). Shihab finds out that the latter opinion is widely adopted by scholars of the Ḥanafī School, as well as reformist Muslim scholars. In this respect, he appears to be more inclined to the latter. It is shown in his viewpoint that if the *Sunna* contradicts the Qur'an, there is no other way but to defend the Qur'an, whose authenticity is decisive, and to leave aside the *Sunna*, whose authenticity is speculative (Shihab 2013b:191). As such, Shihab advocates that the Qur'an becomes the ultimate frame of reference within which the *Sunna,* and other texts of Islam, must be understood.

In doing so, Shihab calls for a critical reading of the *Sunna* by investigating its particular context; whether the Prophet said something in his position as the Messenger of God, a religious interpreter (*muftī*), a leader, a judge, or just as an ordinary man (Shihab 2013b:192).[27] For him, all the Prophet's interpretations are

[27] Regarding the different scopes of the legality of the *Sunna*, Shihab refers to the opinion of a Mālikī jurist, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī (d. 684/1285). In *al-Iḥkām fī Tamyīz al-Fatwā ʿan al-Aḥkām wa Taṣarruf al-Qāḍī wa al-Imām*, al- Qarāfī classifies the Prophet's conduct (*taṣarruf*) in four categories: his conduct in *iftāʾ* (giving religious interpretation), *risāla* (delivering the message of God), *ḥukm* (giving judicial resolution), and *imāma* (being a political leader). According to him, only the first two categories are valid and binding forever (Qarāfī 1995:99–108). In the modern age, Maḥmūd Shaltūt (1893-1963) specifies the types of the *Sunna* that can be referred to as reliable sources of Islamic legal rulings. In Shaltūt's view, this kind of *Sunna* must be seen according to the Prophet's various positions: in delivering the message of God (*risāla*), leadership (*imāma*), or giving judgment (*qaḍā*). The first is

correct, but it does not necessarily mean that they are always relevant for all situations, because the Prophet sometimes interpreted the Qur'anic text simply by utilizing the examples peculiar to the context of his time.[28]

## Guidance-oriented Interpretation

Probably the most conspicuous characteristic of Qur'anic exegesis in the modern period is that exegetes have begun to put a strong emphasis on the Qur'an as a book of religious guidance. Indeed, the Qur'an has been regarded as a source of guidance for its pivotal role in the textual hierarchy of Islam. Our assessment of the modern role of the Qur'an is pre-eminently based on a phenomenon that started in the late 19th century when Muslim reformists attempted to rearticulate religion from their readings of the Qur'an in response to the challenge of Western worldviews and cultural hegemony. However, it should not be understood, as Johanna Pink (2011:8, n.d.:1–2) argues, that the traditional genre of exegesis has been totally replaced by the modern one, because the former still shows great relevance among a number of Muslim exegetes in modern times.

Scholars of Qur'anic studies view that the wind of modern interpretation of the Qur'an first appeared on the Indian Peninsula. Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) was a leading reformer from the region to introduce a rationalistic approach to the Qur'an. Enmeshed with a modern scientific conception of nature and the universe, he vibrantly attempted to demonstrate that the truth contained in the Qur'an is verifiable at any age (Baljon 1968:4). Thus, there could not be any contradiction between modern science and the Muslim Scripture. Ahmad Khan believed that God has two covenants: the practical covenant, which is represented by the law of nature,

universal and binding to all Muslims, whereas the rest are not, but rather depending on the position of the person at stake, whether he acts as a leader or a judge (Shaltūt 2001b:500–01).

[28] Interpreting Q. 1:7, Shihab sheds light on two groups: those scolded people (*al-maghḍūb ʿalaihim*) and those going astray (*al-ḍāllīn*). He admits that there are reports suggesting that the scolded people were the Jews, whereas the stray people were the Christians. However, Shihab views that such interpretation of the Prophet is based on his opinion regarding the real examples of his time. It does not necessarily mean that all Jews at any time are scolded by God. The scolded Jews were those who stood against God's commands. Accordingly, pious Jews did not belong to this category. Non-Jewish people might be scolded as well, if they violated the teachings of God. In this case, Shihab argues that God's wrath and grace are not extended based on race, nation and descent, but rather based on purposes and conduct (Shihab 2012b:I,86–7). The case of Christians is likewise; the Prophet utilized a reality at his time to depict the digression of some Christians (Shihab 2012b:I,90). Thus, it does not apply to all Christians. As a Muslim, Shihab believes that Islam is the correct religion. Yet, he tends to avoid such direct judgment in public space, in particular, and calls Muslims to leave the issue to the discretion of God in the hereafter as shown when interpreting Q. 2:62.

and the verbal covenant, which is displayed in the Qur'an. These covenants cannot contradict each other because it is inconceivable that God would contradict Himself (Wielandt 2002:126).

In another part of the Muslim world, Muḥammad ʿAbduh (1949-1905) emerged in Egypt as the ideational father of the guidance-oriented interpretation of the Qur'an. Different from his counterpart on the Indian Peninsula, ʿAbduh started his project of Islamic reformation by writing a modern reconfiguration of Muslim theology, specifically in his work *Risālat al-Tauḥīd* (A Treatise of Unity), which is actually eclectic in nature and combines the dogmas of different theological schools. Scholars have argued that both streams of reformism worked independently and appeared from different points of departure. Ignaz Goldziher (1920:321) observes that the Indian Islamic reform was chiefly stimulated by a cultural movement to reconcile religion with Western knowledge, while its Egyptian equivalent was much more theological in nature. It is understandable because in Egypt, a fundamental qualification for a man of religious knowledge stemmed primarily from a thorough acquaintance with classical dogmas (Baljon 1968:4). It was only in the beginning of 1899 that ʿAbduh's pupil, Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (1865-1935), urged his master to write a commentary of the Qur'an. *Tafsīr al-Manār* was written by Riḍā based on ʿAbduh's lecture at the Azhar mosque. Riḍā then continued the writing following his master's death in 1905.[29]

Writing a commentary in a scientific age, ʿAbduh allocated a wide space for rational inquiry into the Qur'an to reveal its ethical and spiritual guidance. He made a sharp break from the traditional genre of Muslim interpretation which generally covered extensive discussions on the Qur'an's rhetorical style, syntaxes, and stories, as well as utilized the Qur'anic text to defend the doctrines of a particular school and repudiate those of other schools. Discussing the Egyptian modern trends of Qur'an interpretation, J. J. G. Jansen (1974:18) observes that before ʿAbduh, the interpretation of the Qur'an was merely a relic of academic affairs, meaning that the interpretation became a discourse that only circulated exclusively among scholars. The reason is that understanding the Qur'an requires detailed knowledge of the technicalities and terminology of Arabic grammar and eloquence. Even a person reading a commentary

[29] Muḥammad ʿAbduh's contribution starts from chapter *al-Fātiḥa* (the Opener) until chapter *al-Nisāʾ* (the Women, Q. 4:125). See Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā's introduction to *Tafsīr al-Manār*, p. 14.

has to deal with extensive discussions on the Prophetic tradition, the Prophet's biography (*sīra*), theology, Islamic jurisprudence, and Sufism. Jansen's argument is based on ʿAbduh's criticism on the interpretative discourses of his era which were considered to have deviated from the ultimate goal of the Qur'an as a source of guidance. In the introduction of *Tafsīr al-Manār*, Abduh says, as his pupil writes:

> "*Tafsīr* that we wish is to understand the Book as a religion that guides humans to reach happiness for their life in the world and their life in the hereafter" (Riḍā 1947:I,17) ... "It becomes clear from what we have mentioned [above] that exegesis is divided into two categories. The first is the rough one (*jāff*) that sets apart from God and His Book. It is intended to discuss words, the syntax of sentences, and the explanation of artistic speeches that produce explicit and alluded meanings. This should not be called *tafsīr*. Instead, it is an example of exercises in arts... The second is the *tafsīr* that we have explained... The real purpose behind those requirements and arts is seeking guidance from the Qur'an" (Riḍā 1947:I,24–5).

With regard to our discussion on Quraish Shihab's approach to the Qur'an, it is very likely that the Egyptian stream of reformism contributed significantly to his contemporary articulation of religion. It is this spirit that aims to re-actualize the pristine Islamic belief with regard to a modern transformation of Muslim society. As mentioned in the introduction, the intellectual atmosphere in Cairo, as well as at the reformed al-Azhar, had enabled him to encounter reformist ideas. Shihab himself explicitly praises ʿAbduh's model of interpretation that predominantly intends to elucidate Qur'anic guidance by directly addressing the actual problems for Muslim society in a way that is easily understood by the average reader (Shihab 2013b:108).[30] Following this trend, he clearly states his position to present the Qur'an as it introduces itself as "guidance for all human beings" (Shihab 2012b:I,ix, 2013b:37). He admits the hardship of revealing Qur'anic guidance to a wider audience when the Qur'an is treated with extensive discussions on its vocabulary and the principles of interpretation. His *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim* is a collection of some 24 chapters that are arranged in chronological order. The book was initially intended to depict the sequence of the divine guidance to the Prophet and his people.[31] Interpreting the Qur'an with such a method was also intended to reveal the congeniality of its topics

[30] Quraish Shihab discusses extensively ʿAbduh's and Rashīd Riḍā's *Tafsīr al-Manār* in his book *Studi Kritis Tafsir al-Manar* (Critical Studies of *Tafsīr al-Manār*), in which he not only highlights the reformist insights of both figures in their collaborated commentary, but also elucidates significant differences between them. Shihab sheds light on ʿAbduh's principles of interpretation, such as the idea about the Qur'anic *sūra* as a unity, placing the Qur'an as the primary source to derive creed and legal obligations, repositioning human reason in the process of interpretation and the importance of understanding the 'customs' of God (Shihab 1994b), which are, in great extent, evident in his religious thoughts.

[31] I unfortunately cannot consult this rare book.

and vocabulary. However, he felt that his attempt did not meet the purpose of effective deployment of Qur'anic lessons to the wider audience of readers due to its complexity (Shihab 2012b:I,xiii–xiv). This propelled him to write exegetical works that proposed simplicity in presentation in order to make the reader easily comprehend the divine guidance.

There are two major genres of interpretation known among modern Muslim exegetes: the conventional sequential verse-by-verse interpretation (*taḥlīlī;* sometimes called *musalsal*) and the thematic interpretation (*mauḍūʿī*). Shihab acknowledges that each has its own merits and functions. The *taḥlīlī* interpretation provides detailed explanations of many things pertinent to a given verse: its context of revelation, its content, its sequence with other verses, and its literary quality. Because the exegete has to discuss various aspects related to the given verse, a comprehensive discussion on a particular topic cannot, very often, be achieved (Shihab 2013b:180–02). In terms of the Qur'an functioning as a source of guidance, Shihab views that the thematic interpretation is more promising since it is able to present a sense of "living" guidance. In the thematic interpretation, the exegete examines new and real problems in Muslim society by collecting a number of verses that deal with the problems in question in order to draw some conclusions about what the Qur'an might say about them. With this method, Shihab contends, the Qur'anic guidance is relatively easy to discern (Shihab 2013b:180).

Shihab observes that there are two styles of thematic interpretation. The first is interpreting a Qur'anic chapter (*sūra*) by shedding light on its principal purposes and examining its central topics. The second is examining a collection of verses that share a particular topic and elucidating the meaning of each in order to draw the Qur'anic insight upon the topic in question (Shihab 2013b:111). Shihab gives serious attention to the second model, and is very critical to the first one. He argues that the first model only shows Qur'anic guidance partially since there are other verses in other chapters that also deal with the same topic and are left out in the discussion. Moreover, the first model discusses only the fixed themes given in each chapter. It does not cover other, newer issues that may evolve or be debated within Muslim society (Shihab 2013b:118). The second model is also called "purposive exegesis" (Amin and Kusmana 2005; Pink n.d.:37–41) because the exegete interprets a collection of relevant Qur'anic verses purposively to address a particular issue.

In the Indonesian scholarly discourse of the Qur'an, Shihab is known as the first scholar to introduce the thematic method.[32] *Wawasan al-Qur'an* (Qur'anic Insights) and *Secercah Cahaya Ilahi* (A Glimmer of Divine Light) are his most important works of this kind in which he discusses several contemporary issues ranging from foundations of belief, human interactions, social and political topics, sciences, arts and environments.[33] With regard to this method, he is very much indebted to his Azhari colleague, ʿAbd al-Ḥayy al-Farmāwī (b. 1942), who has drawn the method in a rather concrete way. To him, al-Farmāwī's evident contribution rests in his formulation of steps toward thematic interpretation. It begins with determining the topics to be discussed, collecting verses related to the topic in question, arranging the verses in their chronological order, delving into the meaning and the correlation of those verses within the structure of each chapter, enriching the discussion with some relevant prophetic traditions, and then investigating the collection of the verses comprehensively (Shihab 2013b:176). Shihab further develops al-Farmāwī's method with some additional annotations. *First*, the exegete has to have a good understanding of contemporary problems that need theological guidance from the Qur'an. *Second*, the exegete needs to pay serious attention to the development of Qur'anic messages on particular issues. *Third*, discussing the semantic meaning of key Qur'anic vocabulary according to the context of the text is highly required in order to obtain comprehensive understanding about certain words that could be meant differently in the Qur'an. And *forth*, the causes of revelation have to seriously be taken into account when one is applying the thematic method in order to discover the precise meanings of each verse according to its historical context (Shihab 2013b:177–79). With such additional annotations, it seems that Shihab is willing to remind everyone who is going to apply this method not to 'force' Qur'anic verses to address contemporary issues that are explicitly or implicitly not prescribed in the Qur'an.

Nevertheless, the eminence of the thematic method in providing living guidance does not make Quraish Shihab leave the *taḥlīlī* interpretation that is deeply rooted in the Muslim exegetical tradition. Working on this model constitutes a particular pride for a Muslim exegete. Through *Tafsir al-Misbah*, Shihab apparently

[32] For a discussion on Shihab's thematic interpretation, see Muhammadiyah Amin's and Kusmana's (2005) "Purposive Exegesis: A Study of Quraish Shihab's Thematic Interpretation of the Qur'an".

[33] Following Shihab's introduction of the method, the thematic interpretation has since become an important academic subject and method among students at Indonesian Islamic universities.

aims at treating the Qur'an as an integral text whose sections are uniquely interconnected in a holistic bond. Treating the Qur'anic text as such has been discussed by Muslim scholars in what has been called the science of correspondence (*ʿilm al-munāsabāt*).[34] The *taḥlīlī* method enables the Muslim exegete to expound upon the miraculous nature of the Qur'an from this point of view. For Shihab, the commentary of a Syrian pre-modern scholar, Ibrāhīm ibn ʿUmar al-Biqāʿī (d. 885/1480), *Naẓm al-Durar fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar*, which had been the subject of his doctoral dissertation at al-Azhar, constitutes his primary source. Aspects of the Qur'anic eloquence, which are missed in the thematic method, are discussed in the *taḥlīlī*. Shihab says in the introduction of *al-Misbah*:

> Serving the principle themes of the Qur'an and showing the congeniality of the verses in each chapter with those themes would contribute to releasing obscurity that is perceived and laid in the hearts of some people ... On the other hand, the desire to explain the meaning of a verse, and to show the harmonious relationship between verses and words in the Qur'an, often requires interpolation of words or sentences regarding the linguistic style of the Qur'an that tends to be succinct (*ījāz*) rather than elaborate (*iṭnāb*)... (Shihab 2012b:I,xv)

On the importance of the *munāsabāt* doctrine, al-Biqāʿī says:

> The science of the Qur'an's correspondence (*ʿilm munāsabat al-Qurʾān*) is a science, from which the reason behind the arrangement of its components is known. It is the secret of eloquence for the Qur'anic mission in the realization of the conformity of meaning with the condition that it addresses. Mastering this science determines the knowledge about the purpose of the given chapter. This implies the knowledge about the purpose of all its structures. Therefore, this science is highly significant; its relation to the science of interpretation is like the relation of the science of eloquence (*ʿilm al-bayān*) to the grammar (Biqāʿī 1992:I,6).

In *Tafsir al-Misbah*, Shihab attempts to put a number of verses in each chapter (*sūra*) that are united by the same topic or narration into one separate group. Through *ʿilm al-munāsabāt*, he attempts to provide some elaborations to show a degree of correlation not only between verses but also between various topics in a given chapter. Employing the *taḥlīlī* method, Shihab intends to achieve what he

[34] The idea about interrelation and linkage between the Qur'anic verses is not new at all. Abū Jaʿfar al-Zubair, Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī had discussed this topic in their works. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and Ibrāhīm ibn ʿUmar al-Biqāʿī had attempted to apply this idea in their commentaries. However, Mustansir Mir (1993:211–12, 218) argues that *ʿilm al-munāsabāt* never acquired the status of mainstream exegetical thought in pre-modern times. This topic becomes a modern trend of Muslim exegesis that falls under indirect Western influence. Mir views that some Muslim exegetes seemingly have in mind Western criticism that the Qur'an is disjointed because it was revealed as separated verses in different times. The application of *ʿilm al-munāsabāt* to Qur'anic exegesis is to dispel such criticism.

cannot achieve in the *mauḍūʿī* interpretation. As such, it appears to him that each method has its own merits and shortcomings (Amin and Kusmana 2005:70).

## A Quest for Meaning

The main purpose of Qur'an interpretation for Shihab, as discussed above, is to reveal religious guidance. In doing so, Shihab apparently cannot avoid discussions on the linguistic details of the Qur'an that declares itself to be an absolutely unique and inimitable Arabic book, the likes of which cannot be reproduced in Arabic or any other language (Rahman 1988:23). The Qur'an symbolizes God-human communication, which propels Muslims at any time to be occupied with the question of meaning. The Arabic language, the expressive quality of which became a peculiar pride among the pre-Islamic Arabs, gains its centrality with the coming of Islam, for it constitutes a 'code or linguistic system' (Abu Zayd 1990:27) through which God communicates with humans. The fourth/tenth-century lexicographer, Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad al-Azharī (d. 370/380) asserts that everyone must seriously learn Arabic to allow him to comprehend the message of the Qur'an. He also states that only the first generation of Muslims was not in need of learning Arabic because the Qur'an was revealed in their own language (Azharī 1966:3–4). On this basis, knowledge of the vocabulary and the rhetorical peculiarity of the seventh-century Arabs' language becomes a necessity when one is going to interpret the Qur'anic text.

With regard to Shihab's educational background in theology and exegesis, it is not surprising when he becomes very much concerned with salient linguistic analysis of the Qur'anic text. His analysis mainly covers discussions on the basic meaning of key Qur'anic vocabulary, some grammatical and rhetorical aspects of the Qur'an, and the new semantic meanings of the vocabulary within the context of the text. In fact, such topics have been widely discussed by Muslim scholars, especially since the 4$^{th}$/10$^{th}$ century when philology had matured, and the study of Arabic grammar, rhetoric and lexicography reached its peak (Saleh 2004:130).

Shihab is highly convinced that Arabic has a rich vocabulary with varied derivatives that can produce various meanings. Nevertheless, in his view all these varieties are still unified with a basic meaning (Shihab 2013a:37–8). A single word that is put in a sentence may produce a new perspective or concept that shifts from its

basic meaning. In this sense, he views that knowledge on Arabic grammar and the rhetorical style of the Qur'an becomes highly significant, without which a reader may fail to achieve a proper understanding of the Qur'anic text. However, this new meaning –or meanings– is not totally disconnected with the basic meaning; the new meaning is, in its essence, still related to the basic meaning.

For instance, the word *kufr* basically means "to cover" or "to hide". It is originally used to designate a farmer who covers the seed he plants with soil (Shihab 2007:140, 2012b:VI,331).[35] It is employed in the Qur'an for various meanings depending on the context in the text. Interpreting Q. 2:6, he mentions five important meanings of *kufr* in the Qur'an. *First*, it refers to people who deny the call and the existence of God, like in Q. 3:10-12. *Second*, it is used to designate those who recognize the truth, but deny it overtly, like in Q. 2:89. *Third*, it means ingratitude, disclaiming God's grace and mercy, like in Q. 14:7. *Forth*, it draws a meaning of those who believe in religion but at the same time abandon its commandments, like in Q. 2:85. And *fifth*, it means "not to condone or to quit" from a matter, like in Q. 60:4 (Shihab 2012b:I,117–18). In sum, those various meanings indicate a religiously negative mentality. *Kufr* in the Qur'an, he concludes, is used to indicate a meaning of "a dirty soul" because of which man is unable to comprehend the truth and divine guidance (Shihab 2012b:I,118). As the dirty soul is manifest in various types, both the believer and the unbeliever can fall in this category. Nevertheless, "unbelieving" becomes the prevalent meaning of *kufr* in the post-Qur'anic period.[36]

In addition, Shihab is very careful in dealing with the Arabic preposition (*ḥarf al-jarr*) that falls after verbs. An example is the word *hadā*, which generally means "to give guidance". He distinguishes the meaning of *hadā* that is followed by the preposition *ilā* (toward) and the other one without any preposition (*mutʿaddī*). *Hadā*

[35] *Muʿjam Maqāyīs al-Lugha* of Abū al-Ḥusain Aḥmad ibn Fāris (d. 395/1004) and *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qurʾān* of al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī (d. 502/1108) are two important sources for Quraish Shihab to inquire the meanings of Qur'anic vocabulary.

[36] Toshihiko Izutsu, a Japanese expert of the Qur'an, argues about the transformation of the semantic meaning of the word *kufr* within the Qur'anic use of it. He views that in the Qur'an the word deviates from its original meaning to become a rather final one. "The verb *ka-fa-ra* –or its nominal form *kufr*– deviates little by little from the original meaning of 'ingratitude' and comes nearer and nearer to the meaning of 'disbelief' or 'unbelief' as the flat negation of the concept of *īmān*" (Izutsu 2008:15) –Islamic belief– or of Islam. In the pre-Islamic period, *kufr* was never put in contradictory to *Islām*. The Qur'an invents a semantic meaning that makes *kufr* opposed to *īmān* and *Islām*, putting it on the negative side and *īmān-Islām* on the positive. In the post-Qur'anic stage, Islamic theology was developed by adopting the Qur'anic conceptual opposition between *īmān-Islām* and *kufr* (Izutsu 2008:49, 51).

with *ilā* means merely "giving information or guidance". Meanwhile, *hadā* without any preposition is more powerful in terms of meaning. It means not merely "showing the direction" but also "accompanying someone to reach the destination" (*mengantar ke tempat yang dituju*). Giving an example, Shihab cites two Qur'anic verses that speak about the Prophet in relation to his possibility of giving guidance. The first with the preposition *ilā*, "*... And indeed you [Muhammad] guide to a straight path*" (Q. 42:52)[37] highlights the ability of Muhammad to "deliver" divine guidance. On the other hand, the second without any preposition "*Indeed you [Muhammad] do not guide whom you like, but Allah guides whom He wills...*" (Q. 28:56)[38] discards his ability of "granting" any guidance to people (Shihab 2013a:79–80).[39] From this elaboration, it becomes clear that the task of the Prophet was only conveying what he received from God, whereas giving guidance remained the monopolized domain of God.

In terms of clarity of meaning, the Qur'anic text, as it declares itself (Q. 3:7), is divided into two categories: the clear verse (*muḥkam*) and the ambiguous verse (*mutshābih*). Shihab observes that Muslim scholars regard part of the Qur'anic text as *mutshābih* when its vocabulary or verse does not clearly designate a certain meaning, because it contains metaphorical meaning, for instance. Some exegetes then come to divide the *mutshābih* verses into three categories: those that cannot be understood, those than can be understood after serious investigation, and those that can be comprehended only by the "well-reputed expert" (*al-rāsikhūn fī 'l-ʿilm*). Because Muslim scholars never come into agreement about the boundaries of the *mutshābih* verses,[40] Shihab tends to avoid getting involved into this polemic, for neither the Qur'an nor the *Sunna* gives clear elucidation about it. He just contends that *mutshābih* has to be treated carefully with serious investigation (Shihab 2013a:215–

[37] "*... wa innaka la-**tahdī ilā** ṣirātin mustaqīm.*" For translation of the Qur'anic text, I refer to *The Qurʾān Saheeh International Translation* by A.B. al-Mehri (2010) with some modifications.

[38] "*innaka **lā tahdī** man aḥbabta wa lākin Allāha yahdī man yashāʾ...*"

[39] Interpreting Q. 28:56, Shihab distinguishes two kinds of guidance. The first is guidance in the form of advice (*hidayah irsyad*), which is expressed in the Qur'an with the verb *hadā* followed a preposition *ilā*. In this respect, both God and humans can give advice. The second is guidance and the ability to reach it (*hidayah taufik*), which is expressed with the verb *hadā* without any preposition. Only God is capable of giving this kind of guidance (Shihab 2012b:IX,622–23).

[40] Muslim scholars never agree about which verses belong to *muḥkam* and which ones belong to *mutshābih*. Most discussions about these two concepts occur at the theoretical level only. In their commentaries, Muslim exegetes do not identify individual verses as *muḥkam* or *mutshābih*; they treat every verse almost the same, except probably the disjointed letters (*al-ḥurūf al-muqaṭṭaʿa*) at the beginnings of some *Sūra*. I am grateful to Prof. Dr. Johanna Pink who brought me to this attention.

17). In this way, Shihab does not give any clear indication how to deal with the *mutshābih* verses.

For the quest of meaning, Shihab introduces two important instruments, which are originally rooted in the discipline of Islamic legal theories (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), into the exegetical discourse, namely *qaṭʿī al-dalāla* (definite evidence) and *ẓannī al-dalāla* (probable evidence). He views that these instruments are rarely discussed among Muslim exegetes because of a common conviction that the Qur'an covers various meanings (Shihab 2013b:212). But, Shihab finds these two instruments highly relevant to expound the meaning of the revealed text. He is convinced that in general every text can bear two possibilities of meaning. Certainly for the author, it contains only one meaning (*dalāla ḥaqīqiyya*), which is his purpose as expressed in the text. For the readers, however, it may engender various relative meanings (*dalāla nisbiyya*), which closely depends on their cultural and intellectual backgrounds (Shihab 2013b:213).

In his articulation of *qaṭʿī* and *ẓannī,* Shihab is to a great extent indebted to the fourteenth-century Andalusian Mālikī legal scholar, Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā al-Shāṭibī (d. 790/1388), whose book *al-Muwāfaqāt* discusses extensively a great deal of issues concerning the principles of Islamic jurisprudence and the purposes of the *Sharīʿa*. Shihab sheds light on al-Shāṭibī's "holistic theory", where one verse cannot be properly understood without reference to other verses as well as to the circumstances in which the Qur'anic text was revealed (Hallaq 2003:164). This implies that most of the Qur'anic verses belong to the category of *ẓannī* or probable evidence, if they are to be read separately. The clarity of meaning may appear when a number of the *ẓannī* evidences, which potentially suggest a common understanding, are put together (Shihab 2013b:214–16), and thereby, lead to a dominantly clear indication. The Qur'anic command on prayer, for instance, cannot be solitarily understood as religious obligation if there are no other evidences –such as from the Prophetic tradition– that are indicative to its compulsion (Shihab 2013b:216–17). Understanding a single verse in Shihab's perspective therefore necessitates minute textual investigation of other Qur'anic verses, the Prophetic tradition and the context of revelation.

## The Fixed Text and the Changing Reality

In general, the Muslim intellectual discourses of the Qur'an focus on revealing its perceived remarkable eloquence and its illuminating content. Shihab sheds light on the Islamic conception of the Qur'an as the long-lasting and universal miracle (*muʿjiza*) of the Prophet Muhammad that surpasses all other miracles of earlier Prophets, which are perceived as rather local, temporal and material, on the grounds that they were sent only to their people for a particular and finite period. The Prophet Muhammad was sent for a universal mission, and thereby, he was equipped with a universal miracle (Shihab 2013b:39). However, Shihab views that discussion on the *iʿjāz* of the Qur'an does not constitute a priority in the modern age. He notices that most people nowadays, including the Arabs themselves, face difficulty –and are even unable anymore– in sensing the literary quality of the Qur'an (Shihab 2013b:127), because they are not born in a culture that equips them with the sensitivity of grasping its literary quality like those the first addressees. Furthermore, he argues that the core of the *iʿjāz* doctrine rests in the element of challenge (*taḥaddī*), which only applies to those who do not believe in the divine origin of the Qur'an (Shihab 2013b130-31).[41] In other words, for him the discussion on *iʿjāz* becomes less necessary for Muslim audiences who already believe in the Qur'an's divine origin.

The question that arises is how a fixed text[42] can be functioned as the ultimate and most authoritative reference to respond to the constantly changing realities? In

[41] Shihab's *Mukjizat al-Qur'an* (the Miracle of the Qur'an) explains several aspects that fall under the miraculous nature of the Qur'an: harmony of its words and structures, attractive rhymes, scientific annunciations, and information about the unseen. His discussion on this topic can be seen as a response to the early orientalist discourse of the Qur'an that raised questions on disjointed topical structures of the Qur'anic text and its grammatical imprecision that are deemed corrosive to the theological doctrine about the divine origin of the Qur'an. In the introduction, referring to ʿAbbās al-ʿAqqād, he mentions a French mathematician and astronomer, Pierre-Simon Laplace (1749-1827), who was questioned by Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) about the place of "divine providence" in the system of the universe. Laplace answered that he did not know where it was located. Shihab concludes that Laplace's answer implies that he could explain the system of the universe based on natural laws, without any involvement of God. Shihab contends that natural laws in the Qur'an are expressed in the term *āyāt* (signs), which constitute part of the miraculous nature of the Qur'an. He aims at drawing an idea that observation on the system of the universe at the end will lead people to an acknowledgement that there is an absolute "Entity" that creates this system (Shihab 2013c:19–23). See also an article "*al-muʿjiza*" (the miracle) in *ʾAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād*'s (1971) *Mausūʿat ʾAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād al-Islāmiyya*, vol. V. pp. 907-14.

[42] Mohammed Arkoun (1928-2010), an Algerian scholar and thinker, introduces a concept of "official closed corpus" to depict the canonization of the Qur'anic text during the period of the third Caliph ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān (d. 35/656). The Qur'an was transformed from being previously kept at the hearts of the Prophet's companions and written in some raw material to become official codices (Arkoun

modern times, this question becomes increasingly significant, especially when the flux of modernity has reached the Muslim world and has generated contrasting values and ways of life.

As a theologian, Quraish Shihab holds firmly the notion of the universality of the Qur'an. It is to say that the Qur'anic instruction addresses not only the Prophet's time, but also encompasses the following generations. Yet, he denounces a notion that its universality necessitates bringing everything back to the situation where the Qur'an was initially revealed. Rather, it is realized through a mechanism of creative hermeneutics that might advance the "meaning" of the Qur'an in order to cover new realities. It is so because of the belief that the Qur'an speaks to all generations (Shihab 2013b:132, 141). The Qur'an's interaction with the following generations is manifest in the continuous Muslim interpretations of it over the course of history. Shihab contends that simply adopting the predecessors' understanding of the Qur'an is by no means a proper solution to respond to the contemporary challenges for Muslim society. The Qur'an has to be constantly read and interpreted in the light of a new context following the development and changing condition of Muslim society (Shihab 2013b:134).

In this regard, the role of the interpreter is very central in the construction of meaning. It goes back to a common notion that there is no text without the intellect. The text cannot say anything without the interpretative action of the intellect. Yet, the intellect cannot produce meaning outside the text. The text must say something and the intellect, with his intellectual and cultural capital, is to construct meanings within the text. Thus, the interaction between the text and the intellect – the interpreter – is the essential factor in the production and reproduction of meaning. Shihab not only highlights the essential role of the interpreter in the production of meaning, but also underlines that the act of interpretation, itself, constitutes an intellectual enterprise that might generate disagreements among the interpreters. He defines interpretation as an attempt of decoding God's Speech according to the human capacity of the interpreter. It is only God who knows the exact meaning of the Qur'an simply because He is the Owner (*Pemilik*) of the text (Shihab 2013b:112–13). It implies that Shihab disagrees with the notion of "the death of the author" in his

1994:35–40) that accordingly annulled other versions of it that might exist. Muslim intellectual discourse of the Qur'an is based on the presumably ʿUthmānic codex.

hermeneutical approach to the Qur'an. In his view interpretations, as much as possible, have be directed towards expounding the purpose of the Owner of the text as indicated in the text. Therefore, stringent linguistic analysis constitutes one of Shihab's key tools of interpretation.

Given that the Qur'an was not revealed in a social and historical vacuum, it becomes apparent to Quraish Shihab that the correct interpretation of the Qur'anic text also depends upon knowing its historical circumstances. Like most other Muslim exegetes, his sources of this knowledge are those exegetical reports which talk about the revelation of a given verse.[43] Those reports have been identified and compiled by some Muslim scholars to become a separate genre, namely *asbāb al-nuzūl* (the causes of revelation), which has a particular literary character. A report is called *sabab* (pl. *asbāb*) if it talks about something or someone having been involved in some way in the life of Muhammad, connecting the situation with the revelation of a particular Qur'anic text (Rippin 2003:570). In this regard, Shihab seems to take *asbāb al-nuzūl* for granted, without further investigation regarding the reliability of those reports, e.g., where they originated, and how they were compiled.[44]

Although Muslim exegetes agree upon taking *asbāb al-nuzūl* as a tool toward understanding the Qur'anic text, they differ at the point at which the interpreter has to take into account *al-ʿibra bi ʿumūm al-lafẓ* (consideration on the generality of the wording) or *al-ʿibra bi khuṣūṣ al-sabab* (consideration of the specificity of the cause) in order to cover new problems and realities. Shihab finds that the majority defends the validity of *ʿumūm al-lafẓ* on the grounds that it corroborates the universal mission of Islam. The proponents of this approach argue that there is no fundamental difference

[43] ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī (d. 468/1075) said "it is not possible to know the interpretation of a given verse without knowing its story and the causes of its revelation." Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd (d. 702/1302) also said, "exploring the cause of revelation is a firm way to understand the meanings of the Qur'an. Ibn Taimiyya (d. 728/1328) has contended that "knowing the cause of revelation helps in understanding a given verse; thereby, knowing the cause leads to knowing the effect" (Suyūṭī 2002:7). Importantly still, Muslim scholars use *asbāb al-nuzūl* to identify the reason behind the legislation of divine ruling (*ḥukm*), to remove the confusion over the meaning of the Qur'anic text, to specify the general wording of Qur'anic verses, or to generalize verses initially addressing certain individuals (Suyūṭī 2005:I,90–5; Zarkashī 2000:I,122–29).

[44] Al-Wāḥidī is deemed to be one of the earliest scholars to write a book on this genre. He collected together as many reports as he could find in his book *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, which is often seen as the one that firmly established this genre. Emerging at the period when the authority of tradition, rather than reason, was judged to be supreme within Islamic learning in general, al-Wāḥidī's work becomes somehow a point of departure for Muslim scholars in the ensuing centuries to assure that the causes of revelation, which have to be sought through transmitted report, become the key to Qur'anic exegesis (Rippin 2003:570).

between *al-ʿibra bi ʿumūm al-lafẓ* and *al-ʿibra bi khuṣūṣ al-sabab*. According to them, the difference only exists at the theoretical level because in practice, both often produce similar interpretations. Standing for the generality of the wording, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) has hinted that interpretations from both very different perspectives often come up with similar results because there are always factors that may generalize a verse for all cases, or specify it for limited ones. Al-Suyūṭī says:

> "Indeed, verses were revealed for given causes. But they [scholars] agree to apply them for other cases, such as the revelation of the *ẓihār*[45] verse to Salāma ibn Sakhr, of the *liʿān* (cursing) verse to the case of Hilāl ibn Umayya and of the punishment of *qadhf* (false accusation of adultery) to the accusers of ʿĀʾisha. These apply to the others as well. Someone who does not consider the generality of the wording says: "These verses and the other similar ones exit [from their particularities] due to another precedent. Similarly, verses become restricted only in their contexts due to a precedent that supports the restriction" (Suyūṭī 2005:196–97).

However, Shihab does not see that both approaches always come with the same implications and results. He argues that the Qur'an was not revealed in social cultural vacuum (Shihab 2013b:134); rather, it was gradually revealed over a period of some 20 years by interacting with the realities of the Prophet's time and corresponding to the needs of the Muslim community. Pointing out the dialectical relation between the text and the context, he contends that "those realities must have preceded or at least occurred at the same time with the revealed verses" (Shihab 2013b:134). He views that the relationship between the text and its context does not get proper attention if it is approached through *al-ʿibra bi ʿumūm al-lafẓ*. Thus, he defends the minority opinion for reading the Qur'an by considering the specificity of the cause, for it can be beneficial for the development of exegesis, itself (Shihab 2013b:135). By taking such a position, it appears that he intends to confirm that reading from the generality of the wording frequently presents repetition of old interpretations and, thereby, fails to support the development of Qur'anic exegesis with respect to new challenges.

Regarding the context of revelation, Shihab criticizes the traditional Muslim discourse that focuses merely on the incident (*peristiwa*) and ignores the importance

[45] *Ẓihār* is an insult proffered by a man upon his wife, by which he likens her to some of his female relatives, with whom marital relation is prohibited such as mother, daughter, and sister. With *ẓihār*, the man proscribes himself from doing sexual intercourse with his wife, but at the same time he is not willing to divorce her, so accordingly other men cannot marry her. *Ẓihār* was practiced in the pre-Islamic period, and was then prohibited with the coming of Islam (Jazīrī 2003:IV,431).

of time (*waktu*) in which the incident in question occurred, and of the person (*pelaku*) addressed directly or indirectly by the Qur'anic text (Shihab 2013b:135). In his view, the incident, the time, and the person that underlie the revelation have to be taken together seriously when interpreting the Qur'anic text.

Since the Qur'an is perceived to speak to all generations, there must be an exegetical mechanism to fill the gap between the "original" meaning of the text and the new reality. In this regard, Shihab argues, interpreting the Qur'an with *al-ʿibra bi khuṣūṣ al-sabab* (the consideration for the specificity of the cause) has to be conducted through a mechanism of analogy (*qiyās*). It is intended to capture the essence of the Qur'anic verses revealed within certain cultural and social backgrounds and then to articulate the meaning in the new context (Shihab 2013b:135). However, the analogy in question, Shihab further affirms, is different from the one frequently employed by traditional Muslim jurists which is said to have been derived from the Aristotelian formal logic.[46] He views that this kind of analogy is not adequate to produce new insights of interpretation, as it merely attaches the new realities to the old ones that were addressed directly by the Qur'an due to their concurrence of the similar effective cause (*ʿilla*; Shihab 2013b:136). To him, such analogy only circles around the idea of bringing new realities in order to be equalized with the already fixed premises. In order to bridge the gap between the original context and the new realities, Shihab proposes the consideration of human interests (*al-maṣāliḥ al-mursala*) to be involved in the operation of analogy (2013b:135–36). In other words, interpretation of the Qur'an must be conducted by examining the meaning and message of the Qur'anic text and collective social sensitivity of the contemporary Muslim society.

It is the influential Sudanese intellectual and politician Ḥasan al-Turābī (b. 1932) who introduces the term *qiyās al-maṣāliḥ al-mursala* in order to refashion (*tajdīd*) a theory of Islamic law. However, nowhere does he define the term in any precise manner and rather leaves it to the assessment of the reader (Hallaq 1997:228).

[46] Wael B. Hallaq views that the Greek formal logic had to wait for some centuries after its introduction in the intellectual landscape of Islam before it was accommodated in Sunni legal theories (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). Some elements of the Greek logic had already crept into *uṣūl al-fiqh* as evident in the writings of such scholars as Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370/980) and Imām al-Haramain al-Juwainī (d. 478/1085). It was Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) who integrated the logic into Islamic legal theory, to a large extent, and deserved full credit accordingly (Hallaq 1990:318, 1997:137).

Shihab refers to al-Turābī from a secondary source, a critic of modernist thought.[47] And neither does he, however, give any further, more clear elaboration what *qiyās al-maṣāliḥ al-mursala* is. Nevertheless, it could be understood that Shihab attempts to orient his interpretation according to the path of religious utilitarianism.

The utilitarianist approach to religion is well known among modernist Muslim scholars who viewed that literal interpretation and the traditional analogy could no longer serve the interests of Muslim society in the modern world. Accordingly, they searched in Islamic tradition for a principle of adaptability that could help them grapple with the changing conditions and eventually found such principle in *maṣlaḥa* (Masud 2009b:162) which had been somewhat controversial among traditional jurists for its alleged function to serve human utility.[48] Muslim utilitarianists develop their legal theory primarily on the basis of *maṣlaḥa*. They subscribe to a set of principles laid down by pre-modern jurists, but modify them according to the advantages of their era (Hallaq 1997:214). Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī (d. 716/1316) and Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī (d. 790/1388) are the pre-modern scholars upon whom the utilitarianists place a heavy reliance.

Muḥammad ʿAbduh (1849-1905) is often seen as a leading proponent of religious utilitarianism, but it is his pupil, Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (1865-1935), who conducted the formidable task of interpreting and formulating ʿAbduh's idea into a sort of legal theory. Riḍā not only had to modify the concept of *maṣlaḥa* "in such a way as to make it unqualifiedly palatable to the orthodox, but also to divest it of the fetters of the medieval theoretical discourse of which the concept was an integral part" (Hallaq 1997:214). Riḍā draws ten principles that he calls "premises" (*muqaddimāt*). First, God has perfected His religion for Muslims. Second, Islam supports ease, for God has omitted the difficulty from it. Third, the Qur'an is the

[47] Concerning the term, Shihab consults a secondary source, Yūsuf Kamāl's *al-ʿAṣriyyūn Muʿtazilat al-Yaum* (*The Modernists are the Muʿtazila of Today*). The book was actually intended by its author as a response against modernist scholars in the 20th century who, in his view, had gone too far in deconstructing the Islamic religious tradition by their stirring call for independent reasoning (*ijtihād*). Kamāl highlighted a common characteristic of modernists who were content to argue by using the Qur'an, the sound *Sunna*, and reason. He argued against the modernist opinion that considered the Prophetic tradition unbinding in human transactions, for in the modernist point of view they had to be examined from the perspective of general principles and purposes of religion (Kamāl 1986:11, 14). Kamāl called them contemporary *Muʿtazila* for their perceived sharing of rationalistic heterodoxy.

[48] For further reading on the legal concept of *maṣlaḥa* in the pre-modern and modern periods see, among others, Wael B. Hallaq's (1997) *A History of Islamic Legal Theories* and Muhammad Khalid Masud's (2009b) *Shatibi's Philosophy of Islamic Law*.

cornerstone of religion. Forth, the Prophet's statements concerning religious matters are infallible. Fifth, God has entrusted Muslims, individually and collectively, to run their worldly affairs as long as they conform to the guidelines laid down by religion. Sixth, matters of belief and worship do not change in time and place and God has perfected them. Seventh, the Prophet's repugnance to answer the detailed questions of his companions was to avoid strictness in religion, or probably because the answer would only fit the interest of the people at that time, not that of the generations after them. Eighth, the pious predecessors (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*) denounced innovation and the use of reason to understand matters that the Prophet was reluctant to answer, however, those who did not witness revelation employed reasoning to understand them and this falls under God's permission (*illā annahū yadkhulu fī-mā ʿafā Allāh ʿanh*). Ninth, the greatness of Islam and Muslims lies when they are able to engage their independent reasoning. And tenth, the truth of religion must be accompanied by intellectuality, so that the people would not go astray because of their fanaticism (Riḍā 1928:16–21; Hallaq 1997:215–16).

Quraish Shihab's approach to the revealed texts largely echoes the utilitarianists who employ *maṣlaḥa* as a principle of dynamism in religion (Kerr 1966:55; Skovgaard-Petersen 1997:66). Putting the Qur'an as the cornerstone of religion, he is convinced that the Qur'an provides detailed guidance only in matters that are beyond human reason and not subject to developments and changes, e.g., foundations of belief, ritual, and metaphysics. As for matters that are subject to development and changes, it only draws general principles which function as guidelines for adaptability to those developments and changes (Shihab 2014b:620). As such, he introduces a notion of differentiation between "religious" and "worldly" social affairs. Showing reliance to al-Shāṭibī, he contends that worship matters, in which reason has no place, must be directly subject to the dictates of the revealed texts. On the other hand, the religious texts concerning human transactions (*muʿāmala*) must be understood from their meaning and purposes (Shihab 2013b:120).[49] Moreover, Shihab frequently cites Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn ʿĀshūr's (d. 1973) works which offer a renewed theory of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿa* (Pink 2010:8) that closely correspond to the contemporary challenges for Muslim society.

[49] In his *al-Muwāfaqāt*, al-Shāṭibī (n.d.:II,300) says, "*Al-aṣl fī 'l-ʿibādāt bi 'l-nisba ilā 'l-mukallaf al-taʿbbud, dūna 'l-iltifāt ilā 'l-maʿānī, wa 'l-aṣl fī 'l-ʿādāt al-iltifāt ilā 'l-maʿānī.*"

Working on the basis of a principle of adaptability, Shihab is ready to propose a harmonious and dynamic relation between the fixed Qur'anic text and the constantly changing circumstances. To him, the text has to be interpreted by way of looking carefully at its semantic meaning, on the one hand, and at the character, the culture and the positive developments of the society, on the other hand (Shihab 2013b:134). In other words, the text has to be understood within the framework of the contemporary context, and at the same time the changing reality has to be directed according to the general values derived from the text. Thus, Shihab is convinced that total adoption of religious understanding or interpretation of the Qur'an from the predecessors is not entirely a correct choice. It is not only because the Qur'an speaks to all generations, but also certain interpretations must have been influenced by the educational and cultural backgrounds of each generation. Compelling a generation to thoroughly adopt the religious understanding of the previous generation would bring difficulties. Besides, it does not corroborate the teaching of religion that supports every positive development and the nature of society that always develops and changes (Shihab 2013b:141).

## The Qur'an and the Challenge of History

The rise of the West as a colonial power had brought about an unprecedented disruption in Muslim societies. Under the rule of European imperialist powers, the "Islamic world" changed to become "Islam in the world" (Haddad 1982:4). The superiority of the West made the Muslim world appear sprawling in the face of modern Western visions about humanity, history, society, and political legitimacy that are, by definition, alien in Islamic history. Muslims had no choice but from these two options, either to participate in the modernization processes or to be isolated outside the dominant track. To be truly Muslim, Muslims have to be faithful to their own heritage and norms. In the globalized word, discussions on democracy, human rights, and female emancipation became more intense in various parts of the Muslim world. In response to the challenge of contemporaneity, Muslim scholars were compelled to formulate a Muslim grip by looking back to their tradition and to the Qur'an, in particular. The result is varied depending on the degree of their rationality

and of their understanding of the present reality.[50] In this regard, the Qur'an has been the subject of reference to re-discover God's laws in society and history.

For Muslims, the Qur'an is the written book (*al-kitāb al-masṭūr*), while the universe is the deployed book (*al-kitāb al-manshūr*). Quraish Shihab believes that the Qur'an contains the rationales of God's laws in a general sense in every aspect of life including in the flow of history. God's laws are definitive and will never be subject to changes. Development and changes in human history can be understood if man has appropriate understanding about the Qur'anic message (Shihab 2013b:245) that is a deep comprehension about the rise and the fall of a nation. God, as the only Creator of the universe, is accordingly understood as the "Maker" of history. He controls every moment and every historical event occurs under His knowledge. Yet, it is not God alone who is responsible for the historical processes. Every individual shares this responsibility as His vicegerent (Haddad 1982:6).

According to Shihab, the relation between God's and man's responsibility in the flow of history is implicitly covered by Q. 13:11, "*Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.*" Shihab argues that communal change will only happen by submission to God's laws in social life. This change will only occur depending on the collective desire of all individual members of society to change their condition. Again, these individuals have no choice for the success of change but to follow God's laws in social life. Thus, social development is achieved through a congenially collective movement of its individuals. Divine social laws are applied to all people regardless of their belief and social affiliation. Shihab views that Muslim decadence in the contemporary world is due to their indifference to these laws. He observes that even the Prophet Muhammad had to experience a severe defeat during the Battle of Uḥud (3/625) because of Muslim indifference to God's law (Shihab 2012b:VI,232–33, 2013b:384). In this sense, God's laws in history are universal and applied to all of His creatures. The progress or decline of a society depends on the collective awareness of its individuals and corruption in the society will bring an impact not only on its corrupt members, but to its good ones, as well.

[50] For further reading about Muslim articulation and responses to the challenge of history, see Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad's (1982) *Contemporary Islam and the Challenge of History.*

Shihab is convinced that the Qur'an not only informs the existence of divine laws that regulate everything in the world, but also brings a mission for "positive development." This mission is expressed in many of its verses, more prominently "*to bring humankind out of the darkness into the light.*" Thus, the Qur'an functions itself as the provider of values and guidelines for this change that will only be realized if man takes his role to act according to God's laws (Shihab 2013b:383). In this sense, God is involved in the flow of history because He is the Creator of its rules. On the other hand, man is involved in the historical processes as manifested in his role as the actor in the field who is bestowed with intention and vision to move forward. He views that the Qur'an's mission of change is centered on the doctrine of unity (*tauḥīd*). The unity of God constitutes the core of the unity doctrine from which various other sets of unity are manifest, e.g., the unity of creation, the unity of life, the unity of belief and intellect, and the unity of human origin (Shihab 2013b:389–90).

The Qur'an, and by definition Islam, has its own vision about development and progress. The question is how if these developments are triggered by external factors, where neither the Qur'an nor the Prophetic tradition gives clear instruction? It is more or less the case in the modern period where the West appeared as a dominant power in science, politics, and economics. The wind of change blows from the West and is likely heading to the rest of the world. This challenge of contemporaneity constitutes the core reason that underlies the mandate for Muslim scholars to rethink the foundational text of Islam.

As mentioned before, the role of religion in social life, according to Shihab, is to provide ethical guidelines rather than imposing doctrines on every detail of human life. For example, Shihab comprehends the word *al-maʿrūf* (goodness) in Q. 3:104, "*And let there be [arising] from you a group of people inviting virtue (al-khair), enjoining what is right (al-maʿrūf) and forbidding what is wrong...*", as something closely related to the custom or general consensus of a given society (*kesepakatan umum masyarakat*). Relying on a linguistic analysis, he argues that *al-khair* (the common virtue) must differ from *al-maʿrūf* (the goodness), otherwise there is redundancy of expression which is inconceivable according to the Muslim conception of the Qur'an as the Speech of God, which is unqualifiedly scrupulous and accurate. He contends that the Qur'anic use of *al-khair* refers to universal values which have been derived from the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition, while *al-maʿrūf* is closer to the

meaning of common virtue in a society that, in this case, is in line with the general idea of *al-khair* (Shihab 2012b:II,210–12). In this sense, *al-khair* is abstract and universal, while *al-maʿrūf* is concrete, local, and may change with the changing of time and custom. Therefore, there is only one version of *al-khair* in Islam, whereas there could be various versions of *al-maʿrūf* that can be acknowledged by religion. And Shihab views that *al-maʿrūf* is the best way to promote *al-khair*, since it is more concrete, and lives within a given society or generation.

In this regard, it appears that Shihab wants to emphasize that universal virtues embraced by religion need to be adapted in a more concrete way with whatever new traditions in Muslim society in order for these universal values to function well within the given society. In line with this argument, the contemporary challenge for Muslims in all means has its own uniqueness, and therefore cannot be simply subjugated to tradition and the solutions of the past.

## The Qur'an and Scientific Findings

The emergence of what is called "scientific exegesis" (*al-tafsīr al-ʿilmī*) in the Muslim world does not escape the attention of Quraish Shihab. It was initially a response to technological and scientific developments introduced by European people to the Muslim world during the colonial period. This had led some Muslims exegetes to work on this aspect in order to emphasize the legitimacy of the Qur'an as the "explanation of everything" (*tibyān li-kulli shai'*). They endeavored to find in the Qur'an what had been discovered by modern sciences and emphasized that the Qur'an had, for centuries, preceded modern science (*sabaq al-Qurʾān al-ʿilm al-ḥadīth*) in scientific findings (Jansen 1974:35). Accordingly, scientific-oriented exegesis had been employed by its proponents to spread a message that Islam did support science and did not oppose scientific developments whatsoever. It was a proactive measure against the backdrop of a daunting historical experience in Europe during the Middle Ages when scientists were confronted with punishment if their scientific findings were in contradiction to the religious doctrine of the Church.

Quraish Shihab is very critical to such a genre of scientific exegesis on the grounds that such an interpretation could bring the Qur'an into what he calls a "speculative arena". He argues that the speculation goes back to the nature of science

which is always subject to verification and changes. According to him, interpreting the Qur'an with scientific findings will push the "Holiness" of the Qur'an into scientific debates. Shihab contends that scientific exegesis was initially motivated by Muslim feelings of inferiority with regard to Western scientific achievements. This inferiority led them to a sort of romanticism, remembering the glory of the past (Shihab 2013b:76), responding to scientific developments by seeking passages from the Qur'an that might be used to justify modern scientific findings. Shihab views that such romanticism is not an appropriate response at all. He argues that it might help Muslims to get away from a sense of inferiority, but only tentatively because it does not touch the core problem that Muslims have to find out with regard to their current condition. Even worse, Shihab continues, romanticism may lead Muslims to stagnation and conservatism which are not in line with the character of science that is always dynamic and progressive (Shihab 2013b:77–8).

Moreover, Shihab views that the proponents of scientific exegesis very often disregard the semantic meaning of the Qur'anic text. They frequently neglect the main topic that a given verse really talks about. He gives an example of Q. 55:33 "*O company of jinn and mankind, if you are able to pass beyond the regions of the heavens and the earth, then pass. You will not pass except by authority*" which is often understood that the Qur'an has discussed the possibility of humans traveling to space, preceding (for centuries) Western scientific discovery of space travel. According to him, such an interpretation ignores the context of the verse – its relation with the previous and following verses – that actually demonstrates a description of the precarious condition that will be experienced by humans in the hereafter. The verse speaks about God's challenge to humans and jinn to pass beyond the heavens and the earth in order to escape from God's "final calculation" (*ḥisāb*) in the hereafter. According to this verse, humans and jinn might be able to pass if only they had power or authority. Unfortunately they have no such authority, so they fail to get rid of God's *ḥisāb* as illustrated in the second following verse (Shihab 2013b:81–2). Enforcing such a "scientific" interpretation, Shihab argues, will bring about a hazardous consequence of interpretation. First, it displays a contradiction between the Qur'anic statement about human capability to pass beyond the regions of the earth and the heavens in Q. 55:33 on the one hand, and on the other hand, their failure of passing them as illustrated in Q. 55:35. Second, it shows a contradiction once

again between the Qur'anic statement about the failure of humans to pass beyond the regions of the heavens and the earth, and the fact that in the 20th century, humans had been successful in landing on the moon (Shihab 2013b:82–3).

A formulation on the relationship between religion and science might be needed, but according to Shihab, it is not by calculating how many aspects of science that the Qur'an contains. Rather, it has to be seen from a more essential perspective, whether the Qur'an impedes or supports scientific adventure and development. He highlights that the development of scientific tradition is not only determined by the degree of scientific contributions to society, but also by the social, psychological, and theological preconditions that allow for scientific inquiry. In this regard, he affirms that there are so many Qur'anic verses that mention the word *ʿilm* – and its derivatives – and stimulate human reason to develop a scientific attitude (Shihab 2013b:157–58). The relation between religion and science, therefore, has to be seen from this perspective. Besides, using reason has a positive connotation in the Qur'an. This is the role that the Qur'an actually can play regarding scientific issues. Thus, it is not justifiable to employ the Qur'anic text either to vindicate or to reject any scientific theory or finding for it contradicts the most essential purpose of the Qur'an as a book of religious guidance and also the nature of science (Shihab 2013b:88) that is subject to changes and verification.

## Western Hermeneutics

*Hermeneutika* is an Indonesian academic term – particularly in the modern discourse of Qur'an interpretation – that is most frequently used to denote modern Western theories of hermeneutics developed by Western philosophers and linguists such as Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), and Jorge J.E. Gracia (b. 1942). Historically, *hermeneutika* was first introduced widely within the academic circles of state Islamic universities in the 1990s in order to enrich the studies of Qur'an interpretation. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, it was included in the curricula of the Department of Qur'an Exegesis at the State Islamic Universities of Yogyakarta and Jakarta respectively and was then

followed by heated and polemical debates, both in printed media and public discussions.[51]

For its opponents, *hermeneutika* is unorthodox, because of its origin as a set of general principles for biblical interpretation. For them, the incompatibility of *hermenutika* to interpret the Qur'an goes back to a different concept of the Qur'an, which is the very literal speech of God, and that of the Bible, which is rather "divinely inspired words" of humans (Husaini and al-Baghdadi 2007:8–11). However, *hermeneutika* for its proponents might be something different from what is understood by its opponents, for they simply define it as the art and method of interpretation (Syamsuddin 2009:5–10). It is true that most of the sources referred to by its proponents are those written by modern Western hermeneutic philosophers. For them, its integration – of course after some adaptation – to the Muslim methods of interpretation is not impossible, for it could make the latter more sophisticated. Moreover, attempts of integrating "secular" disciplines to Islamic knowledge are not something new at all in Islamic intellectual history (Syamsuddin 2009:69–73).

It might be surprising that Quraish Shihab in his old age – when colleagues of his age have reached their intellectual stagnancy – made every effort to write about *hermeneutika* in his new book, *Kaidah Tafsir* (Principles of Interpretation, 2013). It is basically his response to a contemporary question on whether *hermeneutika* is compatible with the Qur'an. His investigation of it focuses mainly on its function as a tool of textual interpretation, and thereby, discards an ontological question about the origin of the Qur'an, since it has been clear-cut for Muslims that the Qur'an read by Muslims today is the same Qur'an revealed during the Prophet's time. This is not to discuss what Western hermeneutics is, nor is it to assess whether Shihab's understanding on it is scholarly reliable. Rather, it focuses on his response to *hermeneutika*: his understanding of it and the possible extent of its adoption to read the Qur'anic text.

Shihab highlights two general trends of Western hermeneutics: romantic hermeneutics and philosophical hermeneutics. Examining romantic hermeneutics as represented by Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey, Shihab notices that

[51] For a brief history of *hermeneutika* and debates on it in Indonesia, please see: Izza Rohman's (2006) MA thesis, *Rethinking Approaches to Interpreting the Qur'an in Contemporary Indonesian Muslim Thought.*

Schleiermacher's hermeneutics puts emphasis on the importance of profound linguistic knowledge and the ability of the interpreter to comprehend the purpose and the thought of the author when he wrote his work within a particular context. Schleiermacher draws the importance of principles of interpretation that could lead the interpreter to a correct understanding of the text. Besides, the interpreter has to penetrate the "world" of the author in order to experience the similar social and psychological situation in which the latter was writing his work (Shihab 2013a:408–10). Dilthey, Shihab continues, develops Schleiermacher's hermeneutics to cover not only text, but also issues of humanity. A text has a substantial meaning within its historical context. To reach this substantial meaning, Dilthey admits that there are differences between science and humanity. The former investigates objects outside humans, whereas the latter investigates humans themselves and their work. Therefore, the reader has to deal with the text as if he lived within the social and historical context of the author (Shihab 2013a:412–13).

On the other hand, Shihab examines philosophical hermeneutics as represented by Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer. He underlines that Heidegger's hermeneutics is based on the idea that a text has its own existence independent from the author's control. Accordingly, it is by no means necessary to comprehend the author's purpose within the text; the most important aspect here is the interpreter's understanding when making conversation with the text (Shihab 2013a:418). Heidegger's notion of semantic autonomy of the text is then advanced by his student, Gadamer, who emphasizes that the purpose of interpretation is not to reproduce the old meaning, but rather to produce and discover new meanings. Thus, the text has no permanent meaning that must be linked to the past (Shihab 2013a:421–22). In this regard, philosophical hermeneutics defends the relativity of meaning that is highly influenced by the relationship between the interpreter and the text. Here a notion of "the death of the author" – as popularized by a French literary theorist and philosopher, Roland Barthes (1919-1980), finds its echo.

Shihab responds to the question of *hermeneutika*, which originally emerged as methodological principles for interpreting the Bible, in a rather humble way. He admits that extensive discussions on *hermeneutika* need a serious endeavor that he himself cannot fulfill (Shihab 2013a:426). While many Indonesian scholars, especially those polemicists, show their explicit rejection of *hermeneutika* toward the studies of

the Qur'an,[52] surprisingly Shihab views that those theories of Western hermeneutics cannot be entirely rejected because there are some aspects in them that might be useful to enrich the Muslim interpretative methodology due to some similar trajectories. He disagrees with those who show repugnance and total rejection of it. However, he does not elaborate further how Muslims can adopt certain aspects of *hermeneutika* into their studies of the Qur'an. Shihab says:

> Therefore, it is not fair – for those who disagree with *hermeneutika* – to reject it outright. This is not only because there are some ideas as presented by its experts that are parallel to those of Muslim scholars, but also there are ideas that after some critical adaptation (*penakwilan*) can be substantially accepted. There are general ideas that can generate a lot of specifications, that partly can be accepted and partly cannot be accepted (Shihab 2013a:427).

In his response to the question of *hermeneutika*, however, Shihab does not clearly mention who really applies *hermeneutika* to Qur'anic studies. To the best of my knowledge, the only name he clearly mentions is Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (1943-2010), an Egyptian Qur'an specialist who is also popular among Indonesian students and intellectuals of the Qur'an. Shihab sheds light on an idea that the Qur'an is a product of culture (*muntaj thaqāfī*), which is coined by Abu Zayd to depict the fact that the Qur'an was revealed by adapting itself to the linguistic and intellectual horizon of the first addressees. Abu Zayd argues that since God, as the Source of the text (*al-mursil*), is beyond any empirical investigation, it is certainly the text itself – which has historical dimension during its revelation – that is available for scientific inquiry (Abu Zayd 1990:27–8; Kermani 2004:176–77). To the best of my knowledge, Shihab does not carefully follow the argument of Abu Zayd when introducing the concept of "product of culture". Rather, he simply refers to the argument of Abu Zayd's opponents – many of whom were Azhari scholars – which states that the "product of culture" proposed by Abu Zayd implies that the Qur'an is produced by humans, an understanding that contradicts the very fundamental faith of Islam. Shihab becomes more convinced with such a definition following the court decision

[52] Adian Husaini and Adnin Armas are among those polemicist scholars who vigorously stand against what they perceive to be religious liberalism. Co-authoring with Abdurrahaman al-Baghdadi, in *Hermeneutika & Tafsir al-Qur'an* (Western Hermeneutics and Qur'anic Exegesis) Husaini (2007) argues that the adoption of *hermeneutika* to the Qur'an can lead to what he calls "relativism" in Qur'anic interpretation, indifferent attitudes toward the *'ulamā',* and the deconstruction of the Islamic concept of revelation. Meanwhile, Adnin Armas (2005) in his *Methodologi Bibel dalam Studi al-Qur'an* (Biblical Methodology in Qur'anic Studies) views that the adoption of *hermeneutika* can bring danger into the sanctity of the Qur'an. His frame of argument is based on Jewish and Christian resentments toward Islam throughout history.

on Abu Zayd's apostasy (Shihab 2013a:474) without critically investigating, further, how an academic debate could end with faith judgment.[53]

Responding to the controversy of *hermeneutika*, Shihab views it necessary to draw a sharp theological line that constitutes a parameter for accepting or rejecting any hermeneutical approach to the Qur'an. It is the nature of the Qur'an as the speech of God, which was revealed in the most eloquent Arabic and whose authenticity is unquestionably guaranteed. From this standpoint, we might not be surprised if he discards aspects of *hermeneutika* that problematize the authenticity of the Qur'an. According to him, the authenticity of the Qur'an is not only divinely guaranteed, but also scientifically proven. He argues that orientalists with 'objective' perspectives will necessarily acknowledge its authenticity (Shihab 2013a:433).[54] This theological argument is also applied to answer the question of God's speech in a human language. How can the Infinite Entity communicate with the finite creature? Shihab reinstates the Ash'ari theological doctrine about the two existences of God's speech: the eternal unuttered speech (*kalām nafsī*) and the temporal uttered speech (*kalām lafẓī*). According to him, this corroborates the redaction of the Qur'anic verse Q. 43:3, "*Indeed, We have made it an Arabic Qur'an that you might understand*". "It" in the verse refers to God's *kalām nafsī*, and the Arabic Qur'an is His *kalām lafẓī*, which emanated from His eternal speech (Shihab 2013a:437).

A question might be raised by the proponents of *hermeneutika* as to whether the Arabic Qur'an truly represents the eternal God's speech or whether the Prophet Muhammad had truly received its perfect transmission from the Archangel Gabriel. For Shihab, it is again a matter of theology that requires Muslim belief. According to him, the integrity of Gabriel is confirmed by the Qur'an (Q. 26:193) as the "trustworthy spirit" (*al-rūḥ al-amīn*) who delivered the revelation to the Prophet in its entirety

[53] The case started when Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's promotion to a position of full professorship was refused by the Committee of Academic Tenure in the 1990s due to a report made by a member of the Committee, ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr Shāhīn, in which he denounced Abu Zayd with apostasy based on his reading of the latter's book, *Al-Imām al-Shāfiʿī wa Taʾsīs al-Aidiyūlūjiyya al-Wasaṭiyya* (al-Imām al-Shāfiʿī and the Founding of the *Wasaṭiyya* [Middle] Ideology). Abu Zayd censured Shāhīn's maneuver that was much more propagandistic rather than academic and lamented that an academic issue had to be brought to the court to arbitrate the faith of the author (Abu Zayd 1995:13). The allegation of apostasy was followed by successive unfortunate events from the court decision on nullifying his marriage to his exile in the Netherlands.

[54] Shihab often cites the testimonies of some orientalists who show a positive assessment to the Qur'an such as H.A.R. Gibb on the formidable rhyme of the Qur'an that could generate psychological impact on the audience (Shihab 2014b:5).

without any reduction or alteration (Shihab 2013a:439). In this regard, he views that this theological perspective (belief) constitutes a point of difference between Muslim and non-Muslim exegetes (Shihab 2013a:440) which might result in different interpretations. At this point, he acknowledges the presence of a theological barrier for Muslim exegetes to go beyond the limits of Islamic theology.

Concerning the linguistic analysis that is dealt with in the *hermeneutika* discourse, Shihab contends that Muslim exegetes share the same point of departure with the school of romantic hermeneutics that makes the purpose of the author within the text the ultimate purpose of interpretation. Nevertheless, the requirement to penetrate the experience of the author seems to be completely problematic from the Islamic perspective because the "Author" of the Qur'an is God Himself. It is not possible for any human to penetrate the "world" of God. Knowledge of God is only possible through understanding his attributes as He introduces Himself in the Qur'an or through the Prophetic tradition (Shihab 2013a:443–47). In this sense, proper understanding of Islamic faith becomes the utmost requirement of interpreting the Qur'an. If Schleiermacher's romantic hermeneutics has to be accommodated, Shihab views, man has to comprehend properly the Islamic faith – especially on God's attributes – and the history of the Prophet (Shihab 2013a:447). At this point Shihab's argument is plausible, because if the Qur'an has to be arranged according to its chronological order, it will reflect the history of the Prophet and his Muslim community.

With regard to the philosophical hermeneutics that puts emphasis on the independence of the text and that the text may reveal meanings other than those meant by the author, Shihab views that such a notion cannot be absolutely accepted because there are so many Qur'anic verses whose understanding cannot be separated, off-hand, from the explanation of the Prophet Muhammad who is, himself, appointed as the Messenger of God. He contends that interpretation must be carried out with a spiritual feeling about the "presence" of God (*keharusan merasakan kehadiran Allah*) and His greatness (Shihab 2013a:449–51). He disagrees with the notion that the text should not be shackled only with the purpose of the author because the purpose of interpretation in Islam is, indeed, directed to understand God's purpose in the Qur'an (Shihab 2013a:455). The notion of "the death of the author" highly contradicts the very basic theological doctrine of Islam: God is always alive and will never be dead like

humans (Shihab 2013a:453–54). From Shihab's argument, we can understand that philosophical hermeneutics cannot be adopted to read the Qur'an for they, from the very beginning, contradict the purpose of Muslim interpretation.

Moreover, the meaning of the text in philosophical hermeneutics is always open to scrutiny; there is no fixed or permanent meaning of the text. Accordingly, it leads to the relativity of meaning. This reminds us of Shihab's frequent argument that the Qur'anic text may cover various meanings (*ḥammāl li 'l-wujūh*). However, he attempts to show the differences between both conceptions. He argues that the notion of *ḥammāl li 'l-wujūh* applies to the Qur'an only when the text allows this to happen from the linguistic perspective and when those various meanings do not contradict with what he calls the "principles of interpretation" (Shihab 2013a:456–57). As mentioned above, the possibility of various meanings of the Qur'anic text is extensively discussed in the subject of *qaṭ'ī* and *ẓannī*. The former indicates the text that covers a rather clear meaning, while the latter designates the text with possibilities of meanings. The variety of interpretations may arise when it comes to a reflection between the text and reality, which according to Shihab, centers on an exegete's understanding of public interest and the situation of his era (Shihab 2013a:459, 461) that may differ from one generation to another and from one society to another.

## Conclusion

The above discussion shows that Quraish Shihab is among those scholars who view that a new articulation of religion must begin from the foundational text of Islam. Showing a great reliance on Muḥammad ʿAbduh's school of thought, he attempts to demonstrate creative hermeneutics which is embodied in argumentation with the interpretative tradition of the past and recasting it in a way that greatly corresponds to the novelty of the present. There is one principle that Shihab takes for granted; the Qur'an constitutes the ultimate evidence of the Prophet Muhammad's mission whose originality is unquestionably guaranteed. As the foundational text, therefore, the Qur'an is inspirational guidance in the face of unrelenting changing historical circumstances. In doing so, he adopts al-Shāṭibī's holistic theory that suggests that understanding the Qur'an has to be conducted through holistic reading of all its verses with reference to one another and to the circumstances in which the

Qur’anic text was revealed. To extend the significance of the Qur'anic text with regard to the new challenges of Muslim society, Shihab adopts an “interest-based analogy” in order to re-actualize the religious foundational principles and purposes in a way that highly corresponds to the construction of the contemporary public interests of Muslim society.

## Chapter 2

# In the Footsteps of a New Scholasticism

Living according to the divine law (*sharīʿa*) becomes the shared normative ideal for most Muslims. *Sharīʿa* – as frequently defined – consists of all-embracing principles and a code of conduct that regulates the life of Muslims in all aspects: ritual, social interactions, and ethics. As widely understood, *sharīʿa* is articulated from the Qur'an and the *Sunna* in the form of *fiqh* (legal rulings) by Muslim scholars who have the competence of exercising independent reasoning (*ijtihād*). *Fiqh* results from religious scholars' argumentation with the revealed texts within particular social and cultural contexts. Thus, it is often called the social construction of the *sharīʿa* (Masud 2009a). Accordingly, there emerged various tendencies of *fiqh*, some of which later developed and became independent schools of law (*madhāhib*; sing. *madhhab*) with their own distinct principles of legal interpretation. In this way *fiqh,* as a set of legal rulings, has for centuries become a guideline and reference for Muslims on how to live their daily lives.

In Indonesia, *fiqh* is considered the Islamic science par excellence for it bears the most concrete implication of religion in the everyday life of Muslims (Bruinessen 1990). Its significance is enhanced by activities of *iftāʾ* (giving legal advice) that provide us with more dynamic legal discourses, bridging the normative doctrines of *fiqh,* and the actual problems for Muslim society.[55] This chapter discusses Quraish Shihab's legal thought as can be observed particularly from his answers to questions on religious issues and his interpretation of the *aḥkām* (legal-related) verses of the Qur'an. It is a point of importance that although not formally trained in the field of *fiqh*, Shihab is often asked to give his opinions on Islamic legal issues. This can be evidence that he is perceived as an authority in religion. In addition, from the part of

[55] In practice, a *muftī* (jurist consultant) will give his *fatwā* (legal opinion) based on his understanding of the questions raised by a *mustaftī* (questioner) and his mastering of legal arguments. The questions asked actually are about any matter, but mostly human conduct. It should be borne in mind that *fatwā* is not only intended to regulate all sorts of human action according to the divine will, but also to bring them to the sphere of *fiqh* (Skovgaard-Petersen 1997:2). Commonly *fatāwā* (sing. *fatwā*) are sought from religiously reputable individuals, but in modern times, they are also sought from *fatwā* councils that consist of a group of the *ʿulamāʾ*.

Shihab, *iftāʾ* can be seen as an extended attempt for his project of indigenizing the Qur'an in which legal issues constitute part of the Qur'an. What is interesting in this regard is that Shihab shows not only the strong influence of Qur'anic hermeneutics when dealing with legal issues, but also follows the spirit of reform in Islamic law as advocated by Muḥammad ʿAbduh and Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā. This chapter focuses on the centrality of *maṣlaḥa* (public interest) and lenience in Shihab's legal thought as a way to respond to the dynamic life of Muslim society in a modern time.

## Construction of Religious Authority

Giving legal interpretations to a society deeply rooted in the *fiqh* tradition for their religious salvation would be meaningful if the person in charge could convince the society of a sort of religious authority. In Muslim society, religious authority forms a central question that determines the legitimacy of individuals in giving articulation of religion. Theoretically it rests mainly in individual competence of understanding Islamic religious texts from which articulation of religious doctrines can be achieved. Additionally, religious authority must be accompanied by moral probity which ensures individuals as entrusted personalities to their religion (Hallaq 2004:ix, 25). However, it should be noted that religious authority is not merely about personal qualities and qualifications, but also has something to do with social acknowledgment which affirms individuals' eligibility to speak for religion to a broader audience. Individual qualities might not work in Muslim society if there is no "willingness from others to credit any given person, group or institution with religious authority" (Krämer and Schmidtke 2006:2). In Muslim society, such competence generally resides in the figures of the *ʿulamāʾ* who are often deemed as the heirs of the prophets (*warathat al-anbiyā'*), or in an institution of the *ʿulamāʾ*.

One of the most important parameters to observe religious authority in an individual is to examine whether his articulation of religion is widely accepted, or whether he is frequently asked for opinions on religious matters (*fatāwā*; sing. *fatwā*). This is an important aspect that will help us understand the extended role of Quraish Shihab in the field of Islamic legal issues.

The classical discourse of Islamic legal theory depicts a close link between *iftāʾ* and *ijthād*. This close link, according to Wael Hallaq (1996:33), explains why the early

Muslim legal scholars stipulated that to qualify as a *muftī*, one had to be a *mujtahid* (an individual qualified to exercise *ijthād*). So, *ijthād* is a distinctive qualification with which Muslim scholars are credited with the authority to give articulation of religion. However, in the post-formative period of Islamic law (after the 4th/10th century), there emerged a perspective that *fatāwā* could be sought from religious scholars with limited – not absolute and independent – competence of *ijthād.* In other words, *fatāwā* are given within the doctrinal boundaries of a *madhhab* (school of law). Accordingly, the discussion over the scope and competence in issuing a *fatwā* is then extended along with the development of *madhāhib.*

Abū al-Walīd ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198), a Moroccan-Andalusian jurist and philosopher, was once asked about the qualifications of a *muftī* according to the Mālikī School. Responding to the question, he mentioned three communities of jurists with regard to the authority of the issuance of *fatwā.* The first are the followers of the Mālikī School who accepted the validity of the School's doctrines and its scholars' opinions (*fiqh*), but had no adequate intelligence in understanding the fundaments of its legal arguments. They were therefore not qualified in issuing a *fatwā.* The second surpassed the first group, because they comprehended well the foundational principles (*uṣūl*) of the school, but they could not derive positive legal rulings from the general precepts set down by the founders. In this case, they had the qualification of issuing a *fatwā* only within the doctrinal boundaries of the school. The third surpassed the qualifications of the former groups. They not only had a thorough understanding of the school's doctrines, but also possessed the quality of comprehending the foundations of religion through direct interpretation of the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition, as well as had the ability to examine the opinions of the companions and Muslim scholars after them. In other words, they had the qualifications for exercising *ijtihād* (legal reasoning) independently. Accordingly, they deserved the authority of issuing a *fatwā* based on their own *ijtihād* ( Ibn Rushd 1987:1500–502; Hallaq 2004:2–4).

Another classification is provided by a Shāfiʿī scholar, Abū ʿAmr ibn Ṣalāh (d. 643/1245). He classifies *muftī* into two general categories: the independent (*mustaqill*) and the dependent (*ghair mustaqill*). The first has the competence of deriving legal rulings directly from the revealed texts independently. He possesses knowledge about Islamic legal theories (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), Qur'anic exegesis, *ḥadīth* criticism, theory of

abrogation (*nāsikh wa al-mansūkh*) and the Arabic language. He is not an imitator (*muqallid*) of any other school, and instead is often tied with the achievement of establishing a school of law. By this definition, a *muftī* of this kind must be an independent *mujtahid* whose *fatwā* is definitely legitimate. The second category, the dependent, is divided in several positions. First, he is an affiliated (*muntasib*) *mujtahid* who possesses the same intellectual qualifications as the independent. He differs from the independent because he does not formulate his own legal principles. He is affiliated to the independent because he utilizes, to some degree, the principles laid down by the independent. In this respect, his *fatwā* has the same quality as that of the independent. Second, he is a *mujtahid* within a school of law who derives legal rulings heavily based on the school's legal principles. In this regard, his *fatwā* is internally sound. Third, he is a jurist who masters the doctrines and arguments of the school, but does not comprehend well its foundational legal principles and methods of reasoning. He may issue a *fatwā*, but his is not as sound as the former's. And forth, he is a good memorizer of the school's doctrines, but is weak in comprehending its arguments. In this case, he has no competence of issuing any *fatwā* (ibn Ṣalāḥ 1987:21–37).

Both Ibn Rushd's and Ibn Ṣalāḥ's classifications of *muftī* put strong emphasis on intellectual competence in legal reasoning – in its various degrees – as a substantial precondition for the issuance of *fatwā.* The different levels of their competence determine the broadness of authority that they may enjoy. No matter how vast one's knowledge about the doctrines of a school, if he is unable to reach the competence of *ijtihād* in its different levels, he is unqualified from issuing *fatwā.* This qualification, according to Ibn Rushd, does not change with the changing of times (ibn Rushd 1987:1503). He even seems to say that one's attainment of *ijtihād* "cannot be confined to any particular school or to boundaries preset by any other *mujtahid*" (Hallaq 2004:5). The competence of direct exercising of the revealed texts can appear in anyone in any period. In this regard, although religious and moral qualities may constitute an element of religious authority, it is intellectual competence that plays a significant role in the field of interpreting the revealed texts.

In modern times religious authority has become a more elusive concept, especially if we consider the upsurge of new contending actors who also publicly speak for Islam as a challenge to the authority of the *ʿulamāʾ* (Eickelman and Piscatori

1996:131). However, the *ʿulamāʾ* still have their supremacy, especially if we regard a special relation that exists between them and members of the Muslim society as shown, for example, in the activities of *iftāʾ*. Importantly still, with the passage of time there emerge the reform-leaning *ʿulamāʾ* who consistently advocate the necessity of a constant re-articulation of religion teachings, adopting what used to be the salient feature of the founders of *ijtihād* activities, i.e. direct confrontation with the revealed texts (Hallaq 2004:24) to respond to the novel challenges in Muslim society. No matter how appealing popular preachers are in their rhetoric and how competent the "new intellectuals" of religion are in their knowledge of religion, they still cannot challenge the religious and cultural capital of the *ʿulamāʾ* in the field of *iftāʾ*, which requires intellectual religious competence, moral probity, and social acknowledgment.

## New Directions of Islamic Legal Thought in Modern Indonesia

In the field of legal thought, the majority of Indonesian Muslims are the followers of the Shāfiʿī School that has been historically dominant among Muslims in Southeast Asia. Although Muslim scholars in Indonesia acknowledge the legality of following one of the four Sunni Schools, the facts have demonstrated that the doctrines of the Shāfiʿī School are the most widespread and the most adopted. The popularity of the Shāfiʿī School can be explained by considering the fact that it was the dominant school introduced in Southeast Asia during the centuries of Islamization processes.[56] In addition, Shāfiʿī legal literature is the most frequently incorporated in

[56] The fact that most of the Muslims in Indonesia follow the Shāfiʿī School leads to an assumption that Islam must have originated from a region where Muslims also followed the Shāfiʿī School. Historians differ in identifying whether Islam came to Indonesia directly from the Arab world or through other regions. Pijnappel ascribes the spread of Islam in Indonesia to the Shāfiʿī Arabs of Gujarat and Malabar, especially because these regions are mentioned so frequently in the early history of the Archipelago (Drewes 1968:440). However, Islamization in Indonesia seems not to have been a one-dimensional process, as Michael F. Laffan (2011) argues, for there had been several actors who contributed to its spread and articulations in the archipelago. Islam itself was then shaped and fashioned by the region's diverse actors with a range of tendencies from syncretic to puritanical. In any case, the existence of the Shāfiʿī School can be traced back to the early dates of Islamization processes. The Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta (d. 1369), who passed through North Sumatra on his way to and from China in 1345 and 1346, found that the ruler was a follower of the Shāfiʿī School. This confirms the presence of the school from an early date, which later came to dominate Indonesia (Ricklefs 2001:4). Moreover, from the 16th century onward, Muslim scholars in Southeast Asia had been familiar with the standard works of the Shāfiʿī School, such as *Fatḥ al-Wahhāb* of Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī, *Fatḥ al-Qarīb* of Ibn Qāsim al-Ghazzī and *Tuḥfat al-Muḥtāj* of Ibn Ḥajar al-Haitamī (Hooker 1983:9). Early *fiqh* works in Malay by Indonesian scholars such as *al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm* of Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī (d. 1068/1658), *Mirʾāt al-Ṭullāb* of ʿAbd al-Raʾūf al-Sinkīlī (d. 1105/1693) and *Sabīl al-Muhtadīn* of Muḥammad Arshad al-Banjarī (d. 1227/1812) made extensive reference to the works of the Shāfiʿī School (Azra 2004:129).

the curricula of *pesantren*,[57] which in the Indonesian context constitutes an indigenous home for Islamic religious intellectualism and the most important institution that produces religious scholars, the *ʿulamāʾ*.

Modernity in the Muslim world resulted in unprecedented religious, cultural and social challenges to Muslim society. In the Indonesian archipelago, these challenges were effectively felt during the first half of the 20th century when the Dutch colonial government held full control over the spread of the archipelago and especially when the Dutch became more involved in Muslim religious affairs by taking part in defining Islam and what it meant for Muslims.[58] There had been a feeling among a number of Indonesian scholars concerning the conditions in which the classical religious texts were deemed no longer ready to provide answers for contemporary social and political developments faced by Indonesian Muslims. Classical logic, too, could not derive answers for the actual problems generated by the new conditions (Hooker 2003:26). Accordingly, alternatives of instruments and approaches to understanding religion in a new, distinct era became necessary. This later gave birth to the emergence of Islamic reformism in the country that aimed at cleansing Islam from corrupting practices, reforming Muslim education, and confronting Western encroachment on the life of Muslims (Noer 1973).

The dynamics of Islamic legal thought in the Indonesian archipelago cannot ignore the significant contributions from the Middle East, especially Egypt, which preceded the task beginning from the second half of the 19th century.[59] The introduction of steam-powered transportation and the print culture that were

[57] Martin van Bruinessen (1990:229) makes a survey on Islamic books taught in the *pesantren*. He finds that books on the *fiqh* subject are the most frequently taught literature, which is followed by books on theology and Arabic grammar respectively.

[58] The Dutch colonial government considered Islam a threat to its interests for it constituted a bond that demonstrated a fighting spirit in Indonesia in the form of rebellion and resistance. Thus, the Dutch attempted to interfere in the role and definition of Islam for Indonesians, emphasizing its meaning only in matters of belief and ritual, and eliminating its political and social meanings. C. Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936) was a prominent advisor to the Dutch colonial government who advised that the government promote the Dutch culture expected to liberate Indonesian Muslims from the religion-based political sentiments and to create a feeling of content with the Dutch rule. The Dutch policy was set accordingly in 1899, relaxing controls on "ritual" Islam while tightening those on "political" Islam (Hefner 2000:32; Noer 1973:22, 165).

[59] Prior to the 1920s, there had been some students from the Indonesian archipelago. In the 19th century, *riwāq al-Jāwā* (a Jawi hall) hosted some students from Southeast Asia. Prior to the attempted reforms by Muḥammad ʿAbduh in 1897, the *riwāq* enjoyed a degree of autonomy in teaching, with its own library and a *shaikh* elected by the Jawi students (Laffan 2003:128). William R. Roff (1970) observes that by the 1920s Indonesian and Malay students in Cairo become markedly numerous and began to identify themselves as a group.

initially intended to facilitate European expansion into various Muslim societies created new opportunities for connections and the exchange of ideas between Muslims from different regions (Feener 2007:2). This can be traced back, for instance, to the correspondence between some reform-minded scholars from Southeast Asia with the intellectual leaders of *al-Manār*, Muḥammad ʿAbduh and Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā.[60] Some local periodicals with reform spirit such as *al-Imām* (1906–1908) and *al-Munīr* (1910–1915) drew many of their articles from *al-Manār* and echoed the reform agendas of both ʿAbduh and Rashīd Riḍā (Bluhm 1983:35). In the field of Islamic legal thought, many articles in the periodicals firmly advocated direct reference to the primary sources of Islam – the Qur'an and *Sunna* – in addressing contemporary issues instead of maintaining submission to traditional jurisprudence (Feener 2007:11) which included the manuals and commentaries of the Shāfiʿī School in this case.

A tendency of adopting the spirit of Islamic religious reform in Indonesia can be seen from a Singapore-born Muslim named Ahmad Hassan (1887-1958), a prominent intellectual leader in a reformist organization Persatuan Islam (PERSIS, the Unity of Islam), who calls for the implementation of *ijtihād* with direct reference to the Qur'an and the *Sunna* as a way to avoid *taqlīd* (blind imitation) and *bidʿa* (unjustified innovation). In addition, Hassan disregards *ijmāʿ* (Muslim consensus), except for that of the Prophet's companions, and dislikes the use of *qiyās* (analogy), except reluctantly in worldly matters where it appears highly necessary for him to do so (Feener 2007:40; Nasution 1996:125).[61] Acknowledging that not all Muslims are able to exercise *ijtihād* on their own, Hassan insisted that they practice what he referred to as *ittibāʿ* (following the proper precedent), which in his view differed from *taqlīd* in that it implied "critical" rather than blind acceptance of the opinions of the *ʿulamāʾ*.[62]

[60] Singapore was an important center of Islamic learning in Southeast Asia in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries with the presence of the Hadrami community there. Within this community there was a group of the Alawi *Sāda* who declared support for the reformist vision of *al-Manār*. Ḥasan ibn Shihāb (d. 1912), Abū Bakr ibn Shihāb (d. 1922) and Muḥammad ibn ʿĀqil ibn Yaḥyā (d. 1931) were the pioneers of this reformist group and were credited by *al-Manār* as dynamic contributors to the promotion of its reformist messages in the Malay-Indonesian world (Abushouk 2007:306).

[61] In the studies of Islamic legal thought in modern Indonesia, there are a number of scholars who deserve to be studied for their contribution to the development of Islamic legal thought in the country. However, I limit my discussion only to three persons, Ahmad Hassan, Munawar Chalil and Sahal Mahfudh, for their outstanding position as members of the *ʿulamāʾ* class whose opinions on legal issues are widely approved. For further reading on the modern development of Islamic legal thought in Indonesia, see Michael Feener's (2007) *Muslim Legal Thought in Modern Indonesia.*

[62] Regarding a question on whether ordinary Muslims ought to do *taqlīd* or ought to be liberated from it, Muḥammad al-Shaukānī (d. 1250/1834), to whom some Muslim reformists were indebted, viewed that they should understand the argument (*dalīl*) of any legal opinion they obtained from the scholar

However, Hassan seemingly restricted the practice of *ijtihād* strictly to questions on transaction matters (*muʿāmalāt*) where public interest (*maṣlaḥa*) is given priority (Nasution 1996:131). On the questions of ritual practices (*ʿibādāt*), he referred carefully to what has been established according to the Qur'an and the *Sunna* (Feener 2007:32–3).

Such a tendency was also shown by Munawar Chalil (1908 - 1961) who was born into a respectable traditional scholar (*kyai*) family whose members had established themselves as successful traders (Hamim 1996:26). Affiliated with two reformist organizations, Muhammadiyah and PERSIS, Chalil appreciated the religious thoughts of both Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (d. 1206/1792) and Muḥammad ʿAbduh. Echoing the spirit of religious reformism, he called for the necessity of *ijtihād* by returning to the Qur'an and the *Sunna* by means of *istinbāṭ* (deduction), and for abandonment of *taqlīd* (Hamim 1996:149–50). Showing reliance on Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī (d. 716/1316) and Muḥammad al-Shaukānī (d. 1250/1834), Chalil emphasized the importance of *munāsaba* (suitability) and the five universal legal principles (*kulliyyāt al-khams*) in determining what was to be regarded as *maṣlaḥa*. However, he restricted the consideration of *maṣlaḥa* in the sphere of *muʿāmalāt* only. Like Hassan, he considers that matters of ritual practices must be subject to the dictates of revelation (Feener 2007:49–50). What distinguishes him from Hassan is that Chalil showed a more appreciative attitude toward the intellectual legacies of *fiqh* and the *pesantren* tradition (Feener 2007:51). This might be understood from the fact that he came from a family with close relations to the *pesantren* milieu. Thus, he was relatively able to bridge the scripturalist reformism as proposed by Ahmad Hassan with the traditionalist milieu of *pesantren*.

A call for a new look at the tradition of Muslim scholarship came from Sahal Mahfudh (1937-2014) who was the chairperson of the Consultative Board (*Syuriah*) of Nahdlatul Ulama – an organization that used to be called traditionalist – as well as the chairperson of the Indonesian *ʿUlamāʾ* Council (MUI). Mahfudh's scholarly career is immensely rooted within the *pesantren* atmosphere and the tradition of the Shāfiʿī School. His point of departure with regard to the necessity of reform in Islamic legal thought is the fact regarding a considerable diversity of legal interpretations that can

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before accepting that opinion. By knowing the argument as such, they are not engaging in *taqlīd*, but rather in a practice labeled *ittibāʿ* (lit. following; Haykel 2009:44).

be found not only among various schools of law, but also within each school. Thus, he sees the necessity to pay serious attention to the doctrine of *ikhtilāf*, (differences in legal opinion). In reading the traditional corpus of Muslim scholarship, he calls for a contextual reading which is characterized by a serious examination of historical, theological, and epistemological contexts in which it is situated and a conscious recognition of *fiqh* as a human construction toward understanding God's law in changing times (Feener 2007:168). Mahfudh feels it necessary to conceptualize *fiqh* that can touch the dynamics of social life and meet the ever-changing needs of the society. In doing so, he adopts and employs extensively the principle of *maṣlaḥa*, which is traditionally rooted outside the Shāfiʿī school, in a way that can work, as much as possible, within the established methodological parameters of the Shāfiʿī School (Feener 2007:170).

## A New Scholasticism and al-Azhar

Modernity, despite the disruption that it caused to the Islamic intellectual disciplines, had led to the emergence of Muslim intellectuals who, on one side, stood in a position against the secular elites who were much more concerned with Western modernization than religion, and on the other side, the traditional *ʿulamāʾ* who seemed to oppose modernization altogether. Skovgaard-Petersen calls those new intellectuals the "Salafis" who aimed at restoring a pristine, practical, and rational Islam. In Egypt this reform movement first appeared in the late 19th century partly as a response to the political and cultural domination of European powers in the majority of the Muslim world (Skovgaard-Petersen 1997:65) by putting Islam as the foundation and inspiration for reform and development. In the present discussion, I will call those reformist intellectuals the "enlightened" Salafis, or enlightened reformists, in order to differentiate them from the scripturalist Salafis who are most likely represented by the Wahhabis who were greatly inclined toward a literal approach to the revealed texts and massively spread their doctrines in the Muslim world beginning in the 1970s under the banner of Salafism.[63]

[63] The term "enlightened Salafism" (*al-salafiyya al-tanwīriyya*) is used by Muḥamamd al-Kathīrī (1997) and Bernard Haykel (2009) to designate the intellectual and reform movement initiated by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad ʿAbduh and Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā in the late 19th century. The movement significantly faded away with the death of Rashīd Riḍā, who is often called the most faithful pupil who successfully elaborated the reform thoughts of Muḥammad ʿAbduh. Some scholars even argue that

Beginning in the late 1890s, Muḥammad ʿAbduh called for the reinterpretation of the principles embodied in the revealed texts as a basis for legal reform (Coulson 1964:202). For his bold struggle for reform, he has been perceived as the "perfect transition man" who introduced what M.B. Hooker (2003:2) calls a "new scholasticism". The notion of new scholasticism finds its resonance, especially if we look at a number of the leading *ʿulamāʾ* within al-Azhar who not only followed, but also defended and refashioned ʿAbduh's intellectual legacy, as we shall see below. Our point of departure is ʿAbduh's *Riṣālat al-tauḥīd* (The Treaty of Unity), which constitutes his eclectic attempt to introduce a modern Islamic theology, selecting from the classical theological discourse what he considered the "best" and "most useful" for modern Muslim society (Abu Zayd 2003:39–40). In general, the book seeks to appropriate the relation between reason and revelation in the modern context, elevating the position of reason in its role for understanding the revelation and denouncing *taqlīd* (imitation) that hinders creativity and innovation of Muslims (ʿAbduh 1989).

Central to ʿAbduh's thought relevant to our understanding of his approach to Islamic legal issues is a theological question regarding an Islamic 'natural law' where he practically equates *sunnat Allāh* (the custom of God) with an ordered system of nature. The starting point of Abduh's thinking for the individual is man's ability, for himself, to distinguish between good and evil through a combination of esthetic instincts and a rational calculation to determine the norm. The obligatory character of this norm is then amplified by religion which informs man that God will punish him in the afterlife if he breaks the norm. The norm can be discovered by the proper use of human natural faculties, but the sanction is beyond nature and natural perception. The case is different for the group in which both the norm and the sanction can be rationally perceived. In other words it can be said that "groups on earth are rewarded and punished for their deeds and misdeeds" (Kerr 1966:121). Such a theological perspective might explain to us the importance of *maṣlaḥa* (public interest) in this new scholasticism which was employed to rearticulate religious teachings in a modern context.

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after the death of ʿAbduh, Rashīd Riḍā himself became more inclined towards scripturalist Salafism (Abou El Fadl 2005:93; Haykel 2009:46–7; Ryad 2009:8). Nevertheless, scholars appear to agree that it is from the 1970s onwards that Salafism becomes more identified with Wahhabism, a revivalist movement initiated by Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (d. 1206/1792).

ʿAbduh's rationalism, in fact, finds its antecedents in the Mu'tazili doctrine[64] and he resurrected it in a way that fits contemporary needs. Yet, the shift from the Sunni School is for ʿAbduh only a matter of emphasis because he avoided calling himself a Muʿtazilī (Kerr 1966:105, 124). ʿAbduh intended to create a new 'theology' that is derived from his eclectic formulation of Muʿtazilī and Sunni doctrines. This is apparent, for example, when he came to determine the role of revelation to lend certainty when reason fails to do so. In ʿAbduh's view, reason has the capability to determine what is naturally good or bad, but it does not always succeed in doing so due to some distortion in its operation by other human qualities (Kerr 1966:125–27). In addressing the social and political questions, ʿAbduh is highly convinced with the inexorability of historical processes. According to him, the quality of government depends on the quality and maturity of the persons in charge of the state, regardless of their religion. For Muslim society, religion may be a point of reference, but it is not a necessary condition for social progress and scientific attainment (Hooker 2003:3). In other words, revelation alone cannot improve the quality of Muslim social and political conditions without the help of understanding human natural law.

Such a theological perspective sustains legal postulates that are brilliantly articulated by ʿAbduh's disciple, Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā. The new scholasticism advocates that on all issues Muslims ought to return to the primary sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the *Sunna*, and to consider the guidance of the pious forefathers (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*). In doing so, the scholars affiliated with the new scholasticism "ought to reinterpret the original sources in light of modern needs and demands without being slavishly bound to the interpretive precedents of earlier Muslim generations" (Abou El Fadl 2005:75–6). Such a thesis represented an outright break with centuries of

[64] Muʿtazila is the name of a theological school of Islam whose foundation is linked to Wāṣil ibn ʿAṭāʾ (d. 131/748) in Basra. Its origin is often linked to the question of the name to be given to a Muslim guilty of serious offence which was raised by Wāṣil to his master, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728). Wāṣil views that the sinful Muslim should be described as *fāsiq,* an "intermediate rank" between *muʾmin* and *kāfir* (*al-manzila baina al-manzilatain*). Wāṣil therefore was opposed to the common opinion of Muslims at the time who viewed that a sinful Muslim in any circumstances could not be other than *muʾmin* or *kāfir* . The theological doctrines of Muʿtazila were later developed and systematized by Abū al-Hudhail al-ʿAllāf (d. 235/849) who came a couple of generations after Wāṣil. Muʿtazili scholars were rationalist in the sense that they celebrated reason and posited it in a central position in understanding the revealed texts. They were not rationalists in the sense of those who claimed to conceptualize a system solely by the use of reason, independent from all revelation. For further reading on Muʿtazila, see Daniel Gimaret's (1993) "Muʿtazila", ʿAlī Sāmī al-Nashshār's (1981) *Nashʾat al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī al-Islām*, and Aḥmad Amīn's (1964) *Ḍuḥā al-Islām.*

Muslim legal tradition and accordingly spawned controversy encountering resistance from the traditional *ʿulamāʾ*.

What is unique from the enlightened Salafi conception of religion is a notion of the dynamic nature of Islam: "the Qur'an has given patterns, rulings, values and principles, but it is up to every age to apply them in the most practical, ethical, and correct manner" (Skovgaard-Petersen 1997:66). *Ijtihād,* according to the enlightened Salafi terminology, functions to determine which Qur'anic verses and Prophetic messages are suitable to the demands of the age. In doing so, they orient their *ijtihād* chiefly within the framework of *al-maṣlaḥa al-ʿāmma* (public interest) which traditionally is a principle of limited application. The enlightened Salafis share the concept rather nominally since they have modified and recast it according to the spirit of their age (Hallaq 1997:214). Much credit must be given to Rashīḍ Riḍā for his creative formulation of *maṣlaḥa.* Riḍā replaced what he excluded from the domain of traditional *qiyās* (analogy) with the concept of *maṣlaḥa* as an instrument to determine the effective cause (*ʿilla*) that underlies the operation of *qiyās* (Hallaq 1997:217) as far as it does not confront the general tenets of religion.

As such, Rashīḍ Riḍā is ready to make a classification of issues in relation to the primary sources of Islam. All matters of worship and creed must be directly subject to the guidance of the revealed texts, while other issues – such as political, judicial and civil matters – should be determined by considering five different types of evidence. First, the revealed texts bearing precise evidence in both meaning and transmission (*qaṭʿī al-dalāla wa al-riwāya*) are not only binding, but also leave no room for *ijtihād* due to their clarity as far as they do not contradict such general principles of religion as averting damage and relieving hardship. Second, cases attested by a text on which the first generation of Muslims reached a consensus are binding. Third, texts that are not clear in indicating meaning or Prophetic reports that are less highly sound, and on the interpretation of which scholars disagree, are not necessarily binding. Such texts are open for discussion and investigation with necessity and interest being the overriding principles. Forth, texts that do not imply legal injunction (*taklīf*) such as those related to the personal attitudes and habits of Muslims — such as dress, food drink, and medicine — at best ought to be binding unless personal or public interest dictates otherwise. And fifth, cases that lack confirmation in the revealed texts —

neither command nor prohibition — must be left for human discretion (Hallaq 1997:218–19; Riḍā 1928:78–9).

The new scholasticism considers all existing schools of law as equal in authority, but its scholars are not eager to restrict themselves to their doctrines for their founders are humans whose opinions could be wrong or could fit only to the interest of the people in their time. In many cases when asked for *fatāwā,* for example, the enlightened Salafi scholars not only respected the idea of "equal orthodoxy" among the existing legal schools, but also showed an inclination toward *takhayyur*,[65] choosing particular rulings from other *madhāhib*, and *talfīq*, mixing views from two or more *madhāhib* (Skovgaard-Petersen 1997:74). An emphasis on the validity of *takhayyur* implies a readiness towards eclectic expedient with regard to the variety of Islamic legal interpretations. Thus *ikhtilāf* (difference) in this school is considered as a source of intellectual wealth that ought to be utilized for the benefit of Muslim society (Esposito 2003:312).

As a man intellectually raised within al-Azhar, Muḥammad ʿAbduh was eager to transplant his reform ideas within his alma mater making it, and its scholars, motors for Islamic religious reform (Khafājī 1988:III,308). He worked hard to realize his dream, but encountered strong resistance not only from senior traditionalist-leaning *ʿulamāʾ* with whom he had poor relations, but also from the government that exploited ʿAbduh's close relation with the British colonial government in order to undermine his credibility (Gesink 2010).[66] Although ʿAbduh's attempt did not succeed as he expected, his spirit of reform was then perpetuated by his pupils who later emerged as prominent figures within the al-Azhar circle, such as Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī (1881-1945), Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Rāziq (1885-1947), ʿAbd al-Majīd Salīm (1882-1954) and Maḥmūd Shaltūt (1893-1963).

[65] The term *takhayyur* was not used to refer to the practice of selecting a certain legal opinion for its utility in the pre-modern period. It was appropriated by Muslim reformers in the modern period to choose legal opinions either from one school or from other schools in which utility became an essential criterion of choice. It is *talfīq* (patching together several opinions from different schools) and *tatabbuʿ al-rukhaṣ* (pursuing less stringent opinions) that have been consistently used throughout Islamic legal theory to describe school-boundary crossing that aims at pursuing legal utility (Ibrahim 2011:30, 36).

[66] Muḥammad ʿAbduh was sentenced to exile because of his involvement in the Urabi Revolt (1879-1882). He headed to Beirut and lived there for a year until he received an invitation from Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī to join him in Paris in 1883. He returned to Egypt in 1888 at the personal level through the mediation of Lord Cromer with the Khedive Taufiq Pasha (r. 1879-1892). Eventually Cromer used ʿAbduh in his political schema against the Khedive Abbas Hilmi (r. 1892-1914; Laffan 2003:121–22).

Al-Marāghī was the first Shaikh of al-Azhar to put forward a detailed proposal of reform (in 1928) that was in line with the religious reform of the enlightened Salafis. He praised the intellectual achievements of the predecessors, but lamented that religious scholars of his time had become intellectually unproductive, abandoning *ijtihād* and becoming more isolated from the world and everyday life of Muslim society. Thus, in order to better defend Islam, he proposed reform by recommending the study of a wide range of subjects: knowledge of various religious beliefs and their histories, modern methods of reasoning, the history of the world, and natural and social sciences which were ignored in the traditional learning of a-Azhar (Marāghī 1929:143–45; Zebiri 1993:18–9). Moreover, al-Marāghī insisted that *sharīʿa* knowledge must be taught concurrently with a spirit of freedom from any school (*madhhab*) prejudices, and Islamic legal rulings ought to be brought in line with modern knowledge and circumstances (Marāghī 1929:187; Crecelius 1967:309; Zebiri 1993:19). Deemed too radical, al-Marāghī's proposal for reform encountered entrenched opposition that forced him to resign in 1929 and expelled Maḥmūd Shaltūt, a strong proponent of his reform, from al-Azhar for some years. During his second term (1935-1945), al-Marāghī attempted to implement his ideas of reform, but in reality he failed to exercise them with concrete and decisive actions (Lemke 1980:149; Zebiri 1993:20).

Substantial reform took place when Maḥmūd Shaltūt was Grand Shaikh of al-Azhar (1958-1963). Shaltūt acknowledged that in principle, his reform was a continuity of that of ʿAbduh and al-Marāghī, putting emphasis on modernization of the curriculum and learning material, advocating *ijtihād* and eliminating school fanaticism. However, the success of reform in his period cannot be exclusively separated from the political context in Egypt's post-1952 revolution when religious institutions "faced the attentions of a unified political leadership which was capable of acting independently" (Zebiri 1993:17). In order to secure its project for Egypt's future, the new government imposed reform on religious establishments which mainly covered the abolition of the autonomous *sharīʿa* courts and the nationalization of public endowments that accordingly brought about the economic weakening of religious establishments. The enactment of the reform Law of al-Azhar Number 103 in 1961 must be seen as part of the same attempt by the government to control the religious sector and to unify the long-divided educational system into a national,

private, and Islamic system (Skovgaard-Petersen 1997:184). It goes without saying that this reform brought about bitter consequences for al-Azhar's autonomy, for it lost much of its independence.

There is still an important fact to highlight that when the Egyptian government repressed the Muslim Brotherhood in 1954, many of its members were imprisoned or went into exile. Meanwhile, those who had been closely connected with the King, mainly those traditional *ʿulamāʾ*, were discredited. At the time of power consolidation, the new government needed a patron that could speak for Islam in a way that met the ideals of the government. The situation thus left a space for the enlightened Salafi *ʿulamāʾ* who eventually appeared a good match for collaboration with the government to implement reform for al-Azhar and also demonstrated willingness for international scholarly cooperation that well-suited the government's foreign political policy (Skovgaard-Petersen 1997:182–83).[67] However, the 1960s reform should not solely be understood as a total dictation from above that broke with the previous tradition of al-Azhar. Outstanding reform-minded scholars such as Maḥmūd Shaltūt, Muḥammad al-Bāhī, and Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Zayyāt participated in the drafting of the Azhar reform law. Thus, the reform should be better understood as a breakthrough made by the enlightened Salafi *ʿulamāʾ* (Skovgaard-Petersen 1997:184–85) which later marked the rise of the enlightened Salafi religious discourse within the al-Azhar circle.

Maḥmūd Shaltūt is not only a pivotal figure behind the 1960s reform of al-Azhar, but also contributed to formulating legal thought that goes in line with the teachings of the new scholasticism. In doing so, he divides Islam into two major fields: *aqīda* (belief) and *sharīʿa* (rule). He contends that *aqīda* is the theoretical aspect of Islam that requires belief from its adherents and can only be determined through a bulk of clear textual evidence, as well as Muslim consensus over its meaning. Thus according to him, the source of *aqīda* is only one, i.e., the Qur'anic text that indicates a clear meaning (Shaltūt 2001b:9, 468). On the other hand, *sharīʿa* represents the divine rule whose general principles have been determined through revelation from which a

[67] Gamal Abdel Nasser made use of al-Azhar as an important political asset for his foreign policy which, to some extent, successfully raised its international reputation. For example, Nasser's support to Sukarno's non-Bloc ideology involved the newly reformed al-Azhar in institutional relationships with the State Islamic University of Indonesia. In 1958, the popular Indonesian author Hamka (1908-1981), was awarded an honorary degree from al-Azhar. In 1962, it was the Indonesian Islamic university's turn to confer the same degree to the Grand Shaikh of al-Azhar, Maḥmūd Shaltūt (Feener 2002:91).

Muslim is able to manage his relation with God, his fellow Muslims, people in the world, his life, and his environment (Shaltūt 2001b:10). According to Shaltūt, *sharīʿa* has three sources: the Qur'an, the *Sunna*, and *raʾy* (reason). The Qur'an, by its nature, functions not as a legal manual but provides only general legal prescriptions. Meanwhile, the *Sunna* provides more detailed explanations of the general principles of the Qur'an and functions as a guide for practice. *Raʾy*, on the other hand, is a method of reasoning to understand the Qur'an and the *Sunna*. It is used to determine legal prescriptions of cases not mentioned in the revealed texts by drawing some implications of the cases prescribed in the revealed texts (Shaltūt 2001:468; Hooker 2003:7). Shaltūt puts Muslim consensus (*ijmāʿ*) under the category of *raʾy* because for him, it is consensus of the Muslim intelligentsia (*ahl al-naẓar*) that has to be regarded as Muslim public interest (*al-maṣāliḥ*). This consensus can be abrogated with a new consensus that determines the changing Muslim interest (Shaltūt 2001b:544, 546).

In Shaltūt's view, the use of reason has to be oriented toward the realization of *maṣlaḥa* both at the individual and public levels. It is apparent when he suggests that cases ought to be examined according to the general premises (*al-qawāʿid al-kulliyya*) that are derived from the Qur'an, such as "the origin of things is permissibility", "the preservation of benefit", "(choosing) facility and eliminating difficulty", "closing the avenues of damage", and "the lesser damage is preferred to prevent a greater damage" (Shaltūt 2001b:465).[68] Indeed those premises had actually been articulated and used by classical Muslim jurists, but they attained a new juridical importance in modern times in the hands of Muslim reformists. Kate Zebiri (1993:120) observes that *maṣlaḥa* in Shaltūt's usage corresponds to the general concept of benefit. In its implementation, it is usually used by Shaltūt to indicate the interest of Muslim society. Regarding the interests of individuals, cases are examined according to the principle that secures them from damage, the determination of which is going back to human value judgments (of experts in certain fields), which underlie the principle of *maṣlaḥa* (Shaltūt 2001a:354–55). As such, Shaltūt emerged within the circle of al-Azhar

[68] *Al-aṣlu fi 'l-ashyāʾ al-ibāḥa, ḥifẓu 'l-maṣāliḥ, al-yusru wa rafʿu 'l-ḥaraj, saddu dharāʾiʿi 'l-fasād,* and *taḥammulu 'l-ḍarar al-khāṣṣ li dafʿi 'l-ḍarar al-ʿāmm,* respectively.

and came to introduce a basis of religious thinking that follows in the footsteps of the new scholasticism.[69]

Another central figure is Muḥammad Sayyid Ṭantāwī (1928-2010) who assumed the position of the Grand Sheikh of al-Azhar from 1996 to 2010. Ṭantāwī was formally trained as a theologian and an exegete. This is apparent from his works which concentrate on Qur'anic exegesis, especially before his appointment as the Grand *Muftī* of Egypt in 1986. Ṭantāwī explicitly acknowledges that he is a disciple of Muḥammad ʿAbduh (Skovgaard-Petersen 1997:252). In his *fatāwā*, Ṭantāwī appears to take more effort and pride in referring to the Qur'an and the *Sunna* and tends to restrict himself from being involved in the complex technicalities of *fiqh.* Of course, this can be understood due to his intellectual lineage which is based in theology and Qur'anic exegesis rather than in *fiqh.* However, his emphasis on the importance of reference to the foundational texts of Islam and on individual rights to exercise *ijtihād* reflects the intellectual legacy of Muḥammad ʿAbduh (Skovgaard-Petersen 1997:279). Besides, Ṭantāwī also shows his primary concern with the adoption of *maṣlaḥa* particularly when dealing with new subjects such as insurance, medical issues, and savings certificates. He is quite prepared to be eclectic in his sources of authority and is more ready to accept the authority of sources outside the revealed texts (Hooker 2003:8; Skovgaard-Petersen 1997:279).[70]

However, Ṭantāwī's intense application of the enlightened Salafi approach to legal issues put him in a situation where he was often seen as pro-government and pro-Western. In 1989 when the government's support for Western-style, interest-based banks was under siege by the expanding Islamic finance movement, Ṭantāwī responded to a government request for a ruling declaring that bank interest might be

[69] Maḥmūd Shaltūt's book *al-Islām ʿAqīda wa Sharīʿa* is one of the best sources to acquire knowledge on his reform ideas regarding the fundaments of Islamic creed and the principles of lslamic legal thought. This book has been reprinted several times and is among some of the books by modern Azhari scholars that are often displayed in bookstores inside and outside al-Azhar.

[70] Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen observes that in the medical *fatāwā* Muḥammad Sayyid Ṭantāwī often employs the principle of "the lesser damage is preferred to prevent a greater damage" (*iḥtimālu 'l-ḍarar al-akhaff li daf'i 'l-ḍarar al-aʿamm*) like in the case of saving a life with organ transplantation. Once he issued a *fatwā* on the invalidity of health insurance because of the element of gambling involved in it. After receiving an explanation from the Doctors' Syndicate stressing that the injured patients would receive their compensation, however, Ṭantāwī issued a revised fatwa that permitted it (Skovgaard-Petersen 1997:279–80).

acceptable.[71] Ṭantāwī's opinion contradicts that of Jadd al-Ḥaqq, his senior both at the Egyptian *Fatwā* Council (*Dār al-Iftāʾ al-Miṣriyya*) and Shaikh office of al-Azhar. Jadd al-Ḥaqq contends that any pre-fixed interest in bank transaction is *ribā* (usury) and therefore is sinful. Ṭantāwī, on the other hand, maintains that banks actually buy money from people and sell it to other people or enterprises; the practice is therefore far from being exploitation, which underlies the prohibition of *ribā.* According to him, pre-fixed interest is a way of assuring that people receive, at least, some return on their money (Skovgaard-Petersen 1997:287). Yet, it might be Ṭantāwī's personal allegiance to the government authority rather than his method of legal interpretation that put him in intense polemics, especially with the Islamists who opposed many of the government's policies.

Nevertheless, it should also be borne in mind that the reformist method of the new scholasticism advocating for a direct argumentation with the revealed texts, re-articulation of religious purposes as embodied in the revealed texts, and the consideration of *maṣlaḥa* may result in legal opinions that are, in nature, dynamic, flexible, and probably pragmatic that may sometimes oppose the prevailing opinions of the old scholasticism. Working on the basis of *maṣlaḥa* and on many occasions, the reformists also appear to introduce opinions that are apt to endorse lenient practices of religion.

## In the Footsteps of the New Scholasticism

The linkage of some in the highest echelons at al-Azhar with the reformist ideas of the new scholasticism must have influenced the intellectual atmosphere within al-Azhar itself, or at least the reformist religious discourse became more familiar within its circle in the second half of the 20th century. From this point of view, we can understand a wider appreciation toward and adoption of enlightened Salafi ideas by certain segments of the al-Azhar alumni, including Quraish Shihab who started his studies at al-Azhar in 1958 and remained in touch with the institution as a student until 1982 – with a break of some years in the 1970s. Before, Shihab's inclination toward reformism had been nurtured in his family, as mentioned in the introduction.

[71] http://www.newsweek.com/tantawi-may-have-been-moderate-he-was-ignored-69235 accessed on December 26, 2014.

As with Ṭantāwī, Shihab was not formally trained in the field of Islamic jurisprudence. Neither does he specifically write works that extensively discuss Islamic legal issues.[72] The best way to trace his legal thoughts is through the examination of his *fatāwā* and his interpretation of the Qur'anic legal-related verses. Because he was professionally trained as a Qur'anic exegete, much of his legal thought is, to a high degree, influenced by the way he interprets the Qur'an. What gives us a strong impression that Shihab is working in the footsteps of the new scholasticism is his great reliance on the Qur'an and the *Sunna* in examining legal issues, his eclectic attitude toward Islamic intellectual legacies, and his conception of religion as a dynamic entity capable of adapting to various situations. In general, his legal thought can be seen from his orientation toward the consideration of *maṣlaḥa* (public interest) and lenience (*taisīr*) in religion.

*a. Maṣlaḥa*

Shihab does not discuss *maṣlaḥa* as a technical concept that is frequently discussed in Islamic legal theories (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) as an instrument of deriving legal teachings. Rather, he considers *maṣlaḥa* as an overriding principle for understanding religious teachings based mainly on his observation of the Qur'anic text which suggests that Islam is always in favor of realizing the common good (Shihab 2014b:15–7) and, therefore, articulation of religious teachings has to be situated within the framework of *maṣlaḥa.*[73] Moreover, he explicitly affirms that a human's task as the vicegerent of God is to realize the common benefit not only for his fellow humans, but for his environment, as well (Shihab 2014b:359–40). In his response to a modern question of nation-states, for example, Shihab views that religion should not be confronted with such a concept because the nation-state, or other types of political sovereignty, is accepted in Islam provided it brings common benefits to the citizens

[72] Shihab's works that may explicitly discuss Islamic legal issues are his M.A. thesis *al-ʾIʿjāz al-Tashrīʿī li al-Qurʾān al-Karīm* (The Miracle of the Holy Qur'an in Jurisprudence) and *Filsafat Hukum Islam* (Philosophy of Islamic Law), which were published by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs in 1987. Unfortunately, I have been unable to examine these rare and difficult works. Muchlis M. Hanafi (2014:30) mentions the later in his testimony to his master, *Berguru kepada Mahaguru* (Learning from the Great Master), yet he does not tell us what the book is really about. Making a categorization of Shihab's work, Hanafi puts the book under the category of "Sciences of the Qur'an and Methods of exegesis", which suggests that the book is more about *tafsīr* methodology than Islamic legal theory per se.

[73] In his lecture in front of the participants of the program for the Training for Exegete Cadres on December 3, 2013, Shihab emphasized that *maṣlaḥa* was one of the most fundamental principles of the Qur'an to address Muslim problems. See: http://psq.or.id/news/kuliah-pkm-prof-quraish-paparkan-maslahah-sebagai-prinsip-dasar-al-quran/ accessed on September 21, 2014.

(see Chapter 3). Moreover, Shihab hints that *naskh* – which he defines as alteration, instead of abrogation – is introduced in order to acknowledge the developments and the changing benefits in human life (Shihab 2014b:224–26).[74]

Once Shihab was asked for his opinion regarding interest-bearing bank deposits during a period of economic crisis. In his response, Shihab tends to allow people to deposit their money on the grounds that their deposit can lead to economic growth and national development whose benefit will go back to the citizens, in general. Regarding the high rate of interest during economic crisis, Shihab views that the policy was taken as an attempt by bankers to avoid speculation and to prevent the creditors from massively withdrawing their money so that the situation would not become worse. Shihab views that high interest might not be favorable for some parties but the matter, according to him, belongs to the question of averting a greater damage. He closes the answer with a hortatory statement that those who receive the benefit from their deposit ought to allocate at least part of it to help the needy (Shihab 2014a:636–38) who are severely affected by the crisis.

*b. Taisīr*

The notion of *taisīr* (lenience) is apparent in Shihab's legal opinions when the benefit goes back to the individuals. Shihab explicitly defends the orthodoxy of revealing lenience and simplicity in religion by referring directly to the Qur'an and the *Sunna.* He mentions a number of Qur'anic verses such as Q. 2:185[75] and Q. 22:78[76] affirming that the very basic character of religion is actually not to put difficulty on humans, but rather to offer easiness. In the *Sunna*, it has been reported that the Prophet Muhammad not only advised his companions to show easiness in religion and to avoid hardship, but it also gives an example of taking the easier of two alternatives as long as it is not sin. Shihab further elaborates that it is also apparent from the Prophet's advice to his companions when they were going to call people by saying

[74] Shihab disagrees with the definition of *naskh* as abrogating an old legal ruling in a verse with the new one because it would imply that the old verse will be neglected without any function of jurisdiction. Therefore, he agrees with Muḥammad ʿAbduh who defines *naskh* as alteration (*tabdīl*), which implies that the old ruling is altered with the new one because the new situation necessitates this alteration. The old ruling will always remain in jurisdiction if a particular situation requires its application. Such a definition, in Shihab's view, gives more guarantees with regard to the jurisdiction of all Qur'anic verses, for each is always applicable in its own particular context (Shihab 2014b:228).

[75] Q. 2:185: "*God intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship.*"

[76] Q. 22:78: "*He has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty.*"

"Give (them) good news and do not scare them away, do facilitate and do not make (it) difficult" (Shihab 2011a:xvi, 2012a:2–3).

Throughout the course of history, Shihab observers, there had been tendencies of practicing religion that aligned hardship with the purpose of becoming more intimate with God's will by securing the highest quality in accomplishing His commands. Such tendencies, he further observers, were regarded by the following Muslim generations as the most perfect practice of religion. Even some considered lenient practices of religious teachings as disregard to religion. Describing this phenomenon, Shihab cites Muḥammad ʿAbduh's statement that "Islam is covered by Muslims" (*al-Islām maḥjūb bi al-muslimīn*). By this, he views that it was Muslims themselves – both the *ʿulamāʾ* and laymen – who concealed the "mercy" of Islam. Some of the *ʿulamāʾ* might choose hardship with a good intention of maintaining discretion and avoiding over-simplicity, but Shihab deplores the absence of balance in mentioning the easiness permitted by religion that could be worthwhile for laymen (Shihab 2012a:4–5). It appears that Shihab disagrees with one version of the practice of religion, not to mention that it is also the most stringent and often perceived as the most ideal one. He acknowledges, rather, that religion can be practiced in various ways, ranging from the most lenient to the most stringent, depending on the situations faced by Muslims.

Quoting a scholar of al-Azhar, Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bāqūrī (1907–1985),[77] Shihab mentions a report regarding a story of a woman who complained to the Prophet because her husband rebuked her when she prayed, forced her to break her fasting, and used to pray *ṣubḥ* (dawn prayer) after sunrise. The husband confirmed all those things to the Prophet, but he was cogent that he rebuked his wife because he viewed that she took such a long time when praying. He recognized that he forced her to break her fasting because she used to fast outside Ramadan, while he was a young man who could not always resist his lust. He also recognized that he used to pray *ṣubḥ* late because he had a problem of waking up at dawn. Then the Prophet suggested that he pray as soon as he woke up and that the wife should shorten her prayer and not conduct non-obligatory fasting except with his permission (Shihab 2007:58–9). With

[77] Sheikh Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bāqūrī was a prominent figure within the Muslim Brothers. He resigned from the membership of the organization upon his appointment as the Ministry of Endowments by President Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1952.

this story, Shihab intends to underline that lenience is not unlawful; it has a firm ground from the revealed texts. It is lawful for those who deal with difficulty in practicing the most ideal practice of religion. He refused the idea that such lenience is deemed as a disparaging attitude toward religion, as long as the person in question does not intend to break the rules of religion.

## Legal Reasoning based on the Principles of Qur'anic Exegesis

*a. Bank Interest*

Bank interest is among the most widely discussed topics in the modern Muslim world for it is frequently linked to the prohibition of usury (*ribā*) in Islam. Shihab's extensive discussion on *ribā* can be found in his *Membumikan al-Qur'an* which highly echoes the opinion nested in the new scholasticism. In doing so, he observes the Qur'anic verses regarding the topic of *ribā* (Q. 2:278-281, 3:130, 4:161, 30:39)[78] according to their chronological order. Of those, according to him, only Q. 30:39 belongs to the Meccan chapter, i.e., the first verse revealed on the topic. It was then followed by the Medinan verses, Q. 3:130, 4:161 and 2:278-281, respectively. He views that Q. 30:39 does not explicitly mention the prohibition of usury, while Q. 4:61 is a censure to the Medinan Jews who used to practice usury (Shihab 2013b:407–08). To examine what the Qur'an means with the forbidden *ribā*, Shihab therefore focuses on three key aspects behind its prohibition as mentioned in Q. 3:130 and Q. 2:278-281: a. *aḍʿāf muḍāʿafa* (multiplying by doubling), b. *mā baqiya min al-ribā* (remains of usury), and c. *falakum ruʾūsu ʾamwālikum* (you may have your principal) – *lā taẓlimūna wa lā tuẓlamūna* (you do not suppress, nor are you suppressed).

[78] Q. 2:278-281, *O you who have believed, fear Allah and give up what remains of usury, if you should be believers ¤ And if you do not, then be informed of a war [against you] from Allah and His Messenger. But if you repent, you may have your principal - [thus] you do not suppress, nor are you suppressed ¤ And if someone is in hardship, then [let there be] postponement until [a time of] ease. But if you give [from your right as] charity, then it is better for you, if you only knew ¤ And fear a Day when you will be returned to Allah. Then every soul will be compensated for what it earned, and they will not be treated unjustly.*

Q. 3:130, *O you who have believed, do not consume usury, doubled and multiplied, but fear Allah that you may be successful.*

Q. 4:161, *And [for] their taking of usury while they had been forbidden from it, and their consuming of the people's wealth unjustly. And we have prepared for the disbelievers among them a painful punishment.*

Q. 30:39, *And whatever you give for interest to increase within the wealth of people will not increase with Allah. But what you give in zakah, desiring the countenance of Allah - those are the multipliers.*

*Multiplying by Doubling.* Shihab mentions a number of reports available in *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* which, in general, can be summarized as follows. It used to happen in the pre-Islamic period that the creditor came to the debtor in order to collect the debt that was already due. When the debtor was unable to pay it on time, the creditor gave him a time extension, but with the condition of multiplying the debt. Reports vary in the degree of multiplying, but all suggest the presence of excess following the debt. In such a situation, the debtor had to accept the request of the creditor. In this case, Shihab underscores two important issues. First, the excess is never mentioned at the time of debt transaction, but imposed at the time due in return for the debt procrastination. Thus, the debtor had no choice but to agree with the condition of extension. Therefore, it is called *ribā al-nasīʾa* (interest of deferment). Second, it still remains unclear whether the prohibition lies exclusively in the multiplying by doubling, or if it also includes any kinds of excess (Shihab 2013b:409–12). To answer this question, Shihab comes to examine the other key concepts in the last verses revealed on usury.

*Remains of Usury.* Shihab observes Q. 2:278: "*...and give up what remains of the usury*," where usury is expressed in the definitive form, *al-ribā.* The question then goes around whether it designates a particular type of usury, which is multiplied by doubling, or not. Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, Shihab mentions, views that the word *al-ribā* in this verse indicates usury by multiplying for three reasons. First, a linguistic premise common among Muslim exegetes suggests that when the same vocabulary is restated in the definitive form (*maʿrifa*), the second must have the same meaning as the first. The definitive form of *al-ribā* is used in both Q. 3:130 and Q. 2:278. Second, it is applying an exegetical principle: a Qur'anic verse without a conditional clause can be explained by referring to its equivalent with a conditional clause. Riḍā views that "multiplying by doubling" in Q. 3:130 forms a condition for the prohibition of usury. Thus, according to him, the definitive form of *al-ribā* in Q. 2:278 must indicate the same meaning, multiplied usury, which is forbidden. And thirdly, the discussion of usury in the Qur'an is always put as a confrontation with alms where the former is called *ẓulm* (suppression; Shihab 2013b:413–14).

Shihab, however, disagrees with Rida's arguments in that such a linguistic principle can only be applied in one series of redaction, not in separated verses like usury verses. Moreover, *aḍʿāf muḍāʿafa* in Q. 3:130 is not a conditional clause, but

rather it is mentioned to describe a type of usury that was commonly practiced at the Prophet's time (Shihab 2013b:414). Nevertheless, Shihab agrees with Riḍā's conclusion, but in the sense that it is based on a number of reports on the pre-Islamic practices of usury where people used to multiply the debt by doubling at the expense of debt procrastination. Q. 2:278 was revealed and ordered Muslims not to take the remains of usury.

*Taking the Principal and Avoiding Suppression.* Because "multiplying by doubling" is not the reason behind the interdiction of usury, Shihab comes to examine the Qur'anic phrase *falakum ruʾūsu ʾamwālikum*, which suggests that the creditor may take back his principal. Accordingly, any kind of excess in the deferment of debt, whether it is multiplied or not, is not justifiable. However, Shihab emphasizes that this excess must indicate suppression on the needy who should otherwise be helped. This is the very meaning of the phrase *lā taẓlimūna wa lā tuẓlamūna*, which ends Q. 2:279. It is restated more clearly in the following verse Q. 2:280: if the debtor is in hardship let be there a postponement until a time of ease comes and to give some amount of money as charity to the needy is better (Shihab 2013b:416–17). As such, the prohibited *ribā* in the Qur'an is *al-ribā al-nasīʾa*, interest of debt deferment that is accompanied by suppression.

With the above argument, Shihab wants to emphasize that the prohibition does not simply lie in any excess of principal, especially because the Prophet used to give some excess when paying his debts. In other words, excess only becomes illegal when accompanied by suppression (Shihab 2013b:417–18). Indeed, it has been a point of agreement among Muslim scholars because the Prophet gave the excess voluntarily. At this point, Shihab does not answer if the case is that the excess is required during the debt transaction.

It is likely that Shihab's opinion echoes that of Muḥammad ʿAbduh and Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā who claim that it is *ribā al-nasīʾa* which is strongly prohibited in religion (Riḍā 1947:III,113, 1970:605–06).[79] Shihab is critical to a report that says

[79] Such opinion is also expressed by Ahmad Hassan who contends that *riba* is not simply extra money along with the principal, but the excessive money that must be paid by the debtor to the creditor due to the failure of debt payment on time. According to him, the prohibition lies in economic exploitation. Thus, he views that bank interest should not be considered *ḥarām* (prohibited). Besides, he employs the concept of *maṣlaḥa* (public interest) by considering the Indonesian context before independence that

"every loan, which brings benefit, is illegal", because the Prophet used to pay more than the amount of his debt. He views that the report is doubtful because of its weak chain of transmission (Shihab 2013b:417–18).[80] Shihab tends to view that not all excesses in loan transactions must be seen as unlawful, but he does not openly suggest that interest is acceptable without any qualification. In this regard, he renders the opinion of Rashīd Riḍā who views that usury is not the case when a man gives some amount of money to another to work with it by determining a certain rate of benefit because such a transaction is favorable for both. The forbidden interest is what is imposed on one party who has no choice but compulsion and what brings benefit to the other without any effort but suppression and greed (Riḍā 1947:III,116; Shihab 2013b:418). It seems that Shihab, in this matter, is following ʿAbduh and Riḍā who tolerated interest if a scheme of *muḍāraba* (as much as possible) could be devised and recast to legitimate the interest (Mallat 1988:74).

It should be noted, however, that *muḍāraba* is a contract between two parties whereby one party, called an investor, entrusts his money to the second party for the purpose of conducting business. One of the essential characteristics of it is that the profit will be shared between both parties based on the pre-agreed proportional share, but if there is any loss, it will be borne by the investor alone (Saeed 1999:51). At this point, while implicitly allowing a man to benefit from a loan transaction, Shihab does not give a clear opinion about benefits taken from the other party in the case of loss in business.

Regarding bank interest, a question was raised to him about the Islamic perspective on working at a conventional bank that runs its transactions based on interest. The questioner seemed confused with widely circulating opinions on the illegitimacy of any transaction with a conventional bank due to the association of bank interest with the religious concept of *ribā*. In his response, Shihab affirms that such an association is a matter of divergence among Muslim scholars. What is surely permissible, according to him, are transactions via a *sharīʿa*-based bank, which he

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by not taking the interest, the money would go for the benefit of the Christian Dutch (Nasution 1996:125).

[80] Shihab refers to Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Sanʿānī's clarification on the report in his book *Subul al-Salām.*

perceives does not accept interest in its transactions.[81] Shihab leaves the matter to the conviction of each individual; if he or she believes that bank interest is not identical to *ribā*, then working at a conventional bank is religiously not prohibited, but if one considers it closely identical to *ribā*, Shihab reminds that not all the transactions within a conventional bank can be definitely categorized as *ribā.* So, if the case is a mixture between *ribā* and non-*ribā* in bank transactions, rendering the opinion of Jadd al-Ḥaqq (1917-1996),[82] Shihab views that working in such a kind of bank is not prohibited because there still exist permissible transactions (Shihab 2014a:639–41) that can justify the legality of Muslim employment in it.

Shihab seems to disagree wholly with the association of bank interest with *ribā* on the grounds that there is no clear argument from both the Qur'an and the *Sunna*, as well as on the fact that the present financial system that involves banks is totally new and was not known during the Prophet's time (Shihab 2014a:640). Moreover, he does not prohibit his Center for Qur'anic Studies from cooperating with conventional banks to finance its programs (see Chapter 5). His opinion, therefore, differs from the *fatwā* issued by the Indonesian *'Ulamā'* Council and Muhammadiyah that confirms the prohibition of bank interest due to their association of it with *ribā* (MUI 2011:444).[83] Yet, unlike Ṭanṭāwī, Shihab avoids giving a straightforward opinion about the legality of bank interest.

*b. Adultery Punishment*

A questioner asked Quraish Shihab about a ruling regarding an unmarried man who committed adultery but then repented, whether he – or she – was going to be lashed or not. In the *fiqh* discourse, an adulterer can be punished when there is testimony from four reliable adult male Muslim eyewitnesses, all who must have witnessed the penetration clearly or who had heard a confession from the adulterer himself. However, practically the condition of testimony from four reliable adult male

[81] Quraish Shihab himself has been the head of the Sharī'a Advisory Board of CIMB Niaga Bank since 2004. See https://www.cimbniaga.com/index.php?ch=gen_about&pg=gen_about_us&ac=29&tpt=niagabiziframetrue accessed on December 26, 2014.

[82] Sheikh Jadd al-Ḥaqq was the Grand Mufti of Egypt from 1978 to 1982 and was then the Grand Sheikh of al-Azhar from 1982 to 1996.

[83] For further discussion on the *fatwā* of bank interest by the Indonesian *'Ulamā'* Council, see Majelis Ulama Indonesia's (2011) *Himpunan Fatwa* and by Muhammadiyah see http://tarjih.muhammadiyah.or.id/muhfile/tarjih/download/Fatwa%2008-2006_Bunga%20Bank.pdf accessed January 14, 2014.

Muslim eyewitnesses is almost impossible to realize, thus Shihab argues that lashes in adultery as mentioned in Q. 24:2 [84] function much more as a "threat", the implementation of which is intended exclusively for those committing adultery by "showing a challenge and without shame" (*sikap menantang dan tanpa malu*). Shihab views when the person commits adultery due to an oversight and then repents, he or she should be exempted from the punishment (Shihab 2014a:508–09). It appears that Shihab highly recommends that those committing adultery should sincerely repent, since true repentance may become a reason that revokes punishment from the perpetrator of adultery. To support this argument, Shihab makes a cross-reference to Q. 5:33-34[85] that deals with the punishment of those who make disaster on earth. Shihab highlights that the penalty can be revoked when the perpetrators repent for what they have done (Shihab 2012b:VIII,476; III,106, 2014a:509).

In the case of confession from the adulterer, Shihab refers to some reports that suggest that the Prophet had attempted not to pass sentence upon those who confessed to committing adultery. Shihab views that confession itself implies repentance (Shihab 2012b:VIII,476, 2014a:509). Featuring the Qur'anic spirit about the implication of repentance, Shihab seems to recommend that physical punishment, as much as possible, is to be avoided. Nevertheless, he does not explicitly contend that physical punishments as mentioned in the revealed texts become irrelevant. All in all, we may understand that Shihab attempts to read the revealed texts in the light of a modern age in which physical punishments are increasingly abandoned.

*c. The Ruling of Silk and Gold for Men*

The ruling of silk and gold for men is an example where Quraish Shihab addresses a question which is not mentioned in the Qur'an. In his response to such a question, he affirms that there is no single Qur'anic verse that explicitly or implicitly prohibits male Muslims from wearing gold and silk. He recognizes that there are a

[84] Q. 24:2, *The [unmarried] woman or [unmarried] man found guilty of sexual intercourse - lash each one of them with a hundred lashes, and do not be taken by pity for them in the religion of Allah, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. And let a group of the believers witness their punishment.*

[85] Q. 5:33-34, *Indeed, the penalty for those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and strive upon earth [to cause] corruption is none but that they be killed or crucified or that their hands and feet be cut off from opposite sides or that they be exiled from the land. That is for them a disgrace in this world; and for them in the Hereafter is a great punishment. Except for those who repent before you apprehend them. And know that Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.*

number of reports that are made arguments by some Muslim jurists to determine the prohibition of gold and silk for men, yet he underscores that the matter actually becomes a point of disagreement among Muslim scholars. The problem, according to him, lies in the meaning of their prohibition, whether it has religious implications in the sense that the wearer will become a sinner, or whether it is merely ethical guidance that exclusively corresponded to the context of the Prophet's time (Shihab 2004:185).

Shihab brings the discussion to a legal premise stating that not all injunctions in the prophetic tradition – be it command (*amr*) or prohibition (*nahy*) – always imply obligation with total religious compliance. He mentions a report from al-Barrāʾ ibn ʿĀzib as recorded by al-Imām al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) that Prophet forbade seven things and commanded seven things. Among those forbidden things, as Shihab mentions are using gold rings, red saddle-cloths, and silver vessels. Among these commanded things are visiting the sick, following the funeral procession, and responding to the invitation.[86] Shihab argues that these prohibitions and commands do not necessarily imply sinful acts and compulsion respectively. To support this argument, he mentions another report by Abū Dāwūd (d. 275/889) from ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib in which the Prophet forbade ʿAlī from wearing silk and gold, but ʿAlī continued that the prohibition was not intended to all Muslims, but only to certain persons exclusively (Shihab 2004:186). As such, Shihab confirms that the prohibition of wearing silk and gold is not only absent from the Qur'an, but also has a weak basis from the *Sunna*.

## Advocating *Ikhtilāf* as a Mercy

A central discourse in Shihab's legal thought is a greater adoption of *ikhtilāf* (difference). As a technical term, *ikhtilāf* is used to designate differences among authorities of religious law either from different schools or within one school. The term is used as opposed to the term *ijmāʿ* (consensus) or *ittifāq* (agreement; Schacht

[86] The complete redaction of the report reads (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 5525): al-Barrāʾ ibn ʿĀzib reported: "The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, prohibited us from seven things. The Prophet forbade us from using gold rings, silk, flax, brocade, red saddle clothes, tafetta, and silver vessels. The Prophet commanded us to do seven things: to visit the sick, to follow the funeral procession, to bless those who sneeze, to return the greeting of peace, to accept invitations, to help others fulfill their oaths, and to support the oppressed."

1971:1061).[87] In his *fatāwā*, Shihab clearly orients his audiences with the advantages of *ikhtilāf*, which in his opinion can facilitate Muslims with various options to practice their religion. Shihab's core argument on *ikhtilāf* lies in his contention about the consequence of the death of the Prophet Muhammad, the most and only authoritative interpreter of religion. Interpretation of religion then becomes a shared enterprise among various Muslim scholars of different generations. He even argues that the Qur'an and the *Sunna,* themselves, contribute to the emergence of *ikhtilāf*, for their wordings are mostly prone to various interpretations. The case in the *Sunna* is even more complex because scholars diverge in terms of the standards and criteria under which reports of the *Sunna* are subject to investigation. This accordingly implies different categorizations among scholars between the sound (or reliable), the weak and the invalid *Sunna* (Shihab 2004:180, 2014a:825–26). Here Shihab puts emphasis on *ikhtilāf* as a consequence of the variety in interpretation that emerges from the 'ambiguous' aspects of the revealed texts.

Quraish Shihab, however, emphasizes that *ikhtilāf* should only occur in the *furūʿ* (branches) domain which covers procedures of observances and human social interactions while the *uṣūl* (fundaments), which deals with Muslim faith, remains the domain that all Muslims should agree upon.[88] Apart from the question of the clarity and the ambiguity of the revealed texts, Shihab views that differences in the *furūʿ* are reasonable and acceptable because Muslims live in different circumstances that sometimes require them to be more adaptive in practicing religion. From this point of view, he comes to respect the equal orthodoxy of different opinions of Muslim scholars at any time. He makes an analogy that those different opinions are just like various "dishes" (*hidangan*) served by God. Everyone may choose whatever he likes

[87] It has been frequently argued that since the early development of *fiqh*, *ikhtilāf* –mostly due to geographical differences– among Muslim jurists not only exists, but is also respected. *Ikhtilāf* is therefore as old as the Islamic legal discourse itself. The earliest treatises on the subject of *ikhtilāf* were written by Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/788) and Muḥammad al-Shaibānī (d. 189/805), both disciples of Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767). Al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) wrote chapters on *ikhtilāf* in his *al-Risāla* and *Kitāb al-Umm.* The earliest known book on this subject was written by Muḥammad ibn Naṣr al-Mawarzī (d. 294/905). Among other popular texts are Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī's (d. 310/923) *Ikhtilāf al-Fuqahāʾ*, Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭaḥāwī's (d. 321/933) *Ikhtilāf al-ʿUlamāʾ*, and Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr's (d. 463/1071) *Kitāb al-Inṣāf fī mā bain al-ʿUlamāʾ min al-Ikhtilāf* (Masud 2009a:70; Schacht 1971:1062).

[88] Nevertheless, Shihab realizes that divergences sometimes happen in the field of *uṣūl*, yet he captures different standards adopted by some Muslims. What is considered by some Muslims as a part of the *uṣūl* is not the case according to some other Muslims. For him, the *uṣūl* must be derived with certainty from the revealed text. In this regard, Shihab hints that Islamic monotheism, Muhammad's prophethood and the existence of the hereafter are aspects that fall under this category (Shihab 2004:181).

according to the quantity that befits his need. Whatever the kind and quantity of the dishes he takes, all are coming from God (Shihab 2011a:xv–xvi). Shihab hints that orthodoxy becomes a field of open contestation among those who have the capability of exercising *ijtihād* directly from the Qur'an and the *Sunna*. When differences occur among them, those are the "dishes" of God (Shihab 2004:110–11).[89]

Aware of the potential disputes caused by *ikhtilāf*, Shihab is working hard to devise *ikhtilāf* as a source of mercy, instead of calamity. To give an illustration, we need to look at Shihab's opinion regarding the question of *hilāl* (the crescent moon that marks the beginning of the Islamic months) that annually (before and at the end of Ramadan) poses a national public debate involving Muslim leaders, academicians, Islamic organizations, and the government.

*a. The Moon-sighting Controversy*

It has been widely known that Indonesian Muslims often disagree upon when Ramadan starts and ends every year. This happens because they are divided by various opinions given by religious institutions and affiliations with which they have had confidence for generations. It should be noted that there had already been various authorities in the Indonesian archipelago before the establishment of the Indonesian state in 1945. To mention some, Muhammadiyah was founded in 1912,[90] Persatuan Islam (PERSIS, the Unity of Islam) in 1923,[91] and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU, the

[89] An identical analogy was expressed by an Egyptian Sufi and jurist, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī (d. 973/1565), when groups of poor worshipers (*al-fuqarāʾ al-mutaʿbbidūn*) and practitioners of humble businesses (*aṣḥāb al-ḥiraf al-nāfiʿa*) complained about the growing tendency of *tamadhhub* (school fanaticism) at the time. Al-Shaʿrānī recommended that they just follow the opinion of any scholar and came to affirm that all the opinions of the *ʿulamāʾ* derived from the same source, the *sharīʿa*. He made an analogy that the *sharīʿa* is just like a great fountain, while the opinions of the *ʿulamāʾ* are various branch fountains which originally come from the great fountain (Shaʿrānī n.d.:3–4).

[90] Muhammadiyah was founded by Ahmad Dahlan (d. 1868 – 1923) on November 18, 1912 in Yogyakarta as a socio-religious organization to propose Islamic religious reform, advocating *ijtihād* (independent interpretation of the revealed texts) as opposed to *taqlīd* (submission to the traditional interpretations propounded by the *ʿulamā*), and seeking to purify religion from what was deemed innovation (*bidʿa*) and superstitious rituals.

[91] Persatuan Islam (PERSIS) was founded on September 12, 1923 in Bandung as an organization to promote Islamic study and religious activities, hosting discussions on reformist ideas that were enjoying considerable popularity at the time. The initial leaders of PERSIS were Haji Zamzam and Haji Muhammad Yunus who were both of merchant class. Prior to 1926, PERSIS did not espouse reformist principles as the basis of the organization, keeping mixed tendencies under the general banner of Islamic study. The organization followed religious discussions by *al-Manār* of Cairo and *al-Munīr* of Padang, and the debates between Jami'at al-Khair and al-Irsyad, two principle organizations for Arab residents in Indonesia, concerning the status of the Arabs among non-Arab Muslims and the *Sāda* (descendants of the Prophet Muhammad) and non-*Sāda* Arabs. There seemed to have been an inclination toward reformist ideas on the part of Haji Zamzam –who spent some three years of learning

Awakening of the *ʿUlamāʾ*) in 1926.[92] Meanwhile, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Council of Indonesian *ʿUlamāʾ* were founded in 1945 and 1975, respectively. The government attempts to play a role to unite different perspectives regarding the Muslim calendar and acts as a ruler to narrow the differences. However, the question of *hilāl* in Indonesia seems to be much more complex than imagined for it involves not only different methods and standards, but also politics and dignity among different groups.[93] In the present discussion, we will not discuss the political aspect behind the moon-sighting controversy. Rather, we focus only on methods and standards adopted by each proponent to determine the moon.

Some view that the divergence regarding the moon question predominantly goes back to the different methods employed by each proponent: the *ruʾya* and the *ḥisāb* method. The *ruʾya* method suggests that both the start and end of Ramadan have to be determined through lunar sighting either with naked eyes or with optical aids. Thus, *imkān al-ruʾya* (the visibility of the moon) becomes the standard to determine the moon. On the other hand, the *ḥisāb* method bases its finding heavily on mathematical and astronomical calculations. This method makes *wujūd al-hilāl* (the appearance of part of the moon above the horizon after sunset) the criteria for the coming of a new month (Djamaluddin 2011:11; Muhammadiyah 2009:78). In Indonesia,

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in Mecca– and other members, which was then enhanced with the coming of Ahmad Hassan, who vigorously insisted on a scripturalist orientation of Islamic reform (Federspiel 2001:84–6; Feener 2007:26–7; Noer 1973:84).

[92] Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) was established on January 31, 1926 in Jombang, East Java, as a socio-religious organization to respond to reformist organizations. In terms of approach to religion, NU extensively relied on religious interpretations of the medieval *ʿulamāʾ* and tended to avoid a direct argumentation with the revealed texts. In recent years, however, there has been a growing interest among the young generation of NU, especially in making a direct reference to the revealed text, while at the same time attempting to accommodate the relevant interpretations of the medieval *ʿulamāʾ*. Hasyim Asy'ari (1875 – 1947), Abdul Wahab Hasbullah (1888 – 1971) and Bisri Syansuri (1886 – 1980) are among the important figures who founded NU.

[93] The Indonesian Ministry of Religious affairs annually invites Islamic mass organizations and experts for a meeting to seek a common understanding concerning the beginning and the end of Ramadan (*Sidang Isbat*). The Ministry is eager to seek uniformity regarding this issue. Yet, this mostly cannot be achieved due to a number of factors. In this case, Muhammadiyah is the big institution that frequently diverges from the decision made by the government. In the *Sidang Isbat* of 2013, Muhammadiyah refused to come because it felt it was being discredited in the public. It viewed that those invited experts were always in favor of the government, and often disregarded the method and the position of Muhammadiyah. Din Syamsuddin, the chairperson of Muhammadiyah, viewed that the absence of Muhammadiyah would ease the decision-making during the *Sidang Isbat*. See: http://www.tempo.co/read/news/2013/08/06/173502806/Din-Muhammidayah-Tak-Hadiri-Sidang-Isbat accessed on September 23, 2014.

NU represents the defenders of the *ruʾya*, while Muhammadiyah and PERSIS both represent the proponents of the *ḥisāb.*[94]

The proponents of the *ruʾya* method claim legitimacy as their method directly corroborates with the literal instruction of the Prophet who said that Ramadan ought to be determined through sighting the moon; if the new crescent moon does not appear in the night of Sha'ban 29 (the eighth month), then the month should be completed in 30 days (*istikmāl*).[95] To them, moon-sighting is more convincing because the appearance of the moon can be visibly ensured. Astronomical calculations are indeed employed by most proponents of the *ruʾya*, but its position is merely as a complement (Azhari 2006:457). On the other hand, the proponents of the *ḥisāb* method claim legitimacy since the method offers more accuracy and is more practical in the modern time. Their argument can generally be said that the Prophet's instruction of watching the moon should not be understood literally, for he said so in a culture whose people were unfamiliar with astronomical calculations (Muhammadiyah 2009:75).

In fact, the dispute arises due not as much to the different methods employed by each proponent, but rather it emerges because each is adamant with its own standard and definition of *hilāl.* Thomas Djamaluddin (2011:30), a researcher at the National Institute of Aeronautics and Space (LAPAN), views that regardless of the different methods that may be employed, the polemics around the Islamic calendar should have been easily settled if there existed an agreement upon the criteria of *hilāl.* The problem lies in the persistence of each group in defending its own criteria of *hilāl.* Generally speaking, the proponents of the *ruʾya* method define a new month with the first crescent moon that can be physically seen (according to NU, 2 degrees above horizon), while the proponents of the *ḥisāb* method define it with a conjunction (*ijtimāʿ*) of the earth, moon, and sun being approximately in a straight

[94] Although Muhammadiyah and PERSIS share the same method, they differ in its details. Muhammadiyah adopts a principle of *wilāyat al-ḥukm*, which suggests that the appearance of *hilāl* in part of the Indonesian territory will be applied as well to the whole territory of Indonesia. On the other hand, PERSIS requires that *hilāl* exist in the whole Indonesian territory. Before, PERSIS adopts a criterion that the moon must be 2 degrees above the horizon (Djamaluddin 2011:11; Niat and Afrizal 2008:10).

[95] A report transmitted by al-Imām Muslim (d. 261/875) reads: "Observe the fasting on sighting it (the new moon) and break it on sighting it. But if it is concealed from you, you should then complete the number as thirty (days)" (*ṣūmū li-ruʾyatihi wa afṭirū li-ruʾyatihi, fa-in ghumma ʿalaikum faʾakmilū 'l-ʿiddata thalāthīna*).

line (Azhari 2006:479; Djamaluddin 2011:11). In its attempt to reduce differences, the Ministry of Religious Affairs sets criteria for crescent visibility as follows: a. moon altitude not less than 2 degrees, b. moon-sun altitude not less than 3 degrees, and c. moon age not less than 8 hours (Assegaf and Irfanuddin 2008:25). Nevertheless, the question of *hilāl* still arises in annual controversy, putting Muhammadiyah as the biggest organization in frequent opposition to the government's decision.

*b. Finding Mercy in Ikhtilāf*

During a program called "Training of Trainer" (TOT) held by the Centre for Qur'anic Studies on October 27, 2010 in Surakarta, Quraish Shihab was asked about the polemic of *hilāl* in the country. In his response, Shihab affirmed that there had been attempts to solve this polemic and in his view, if Muslims were willing to agree, the polemic would end straightly. He mentioned two solutions. The first suggests that the problem would be easily solved if Muslims submitted this matter to the discretion of the state authority, following a legal doctrine "the government's decision relieves the dispute" (*ḥukmu 'l-ḥākim yarfaʿu 'l-khilāf*). The second solution he mentioned is that if the moon had already been seen in a particular region, other regions could follow or adapt to this finding (*wilāyat al-ḥukm*). Shihab lamented that such offered solutions still could not lead Muslims in Indonesia into agreement because each party was tenacious with its own standpoint. In such a situation, Shihab came to argue about the importance of maintaining the greater public interest (*kemaslahatan yang lebih besar*), i.e., avoiding dispute and respecting differences.[96]

Quraish Shihab's answer, especially his first recommendation, seems not to be a neutral solution for it implies that he bolsters the legitimacy of the state in this issue. Before we go any further, however, we need to examine the legal postulate *ḥukmu 'l-ḥākim yarfaʿu 'l-khilāf* in the Islamic legal context. Al-Qarāfī in his *al-Furūq* proposes this postulate, legitimizing the opinion of the ruler and calling those having different opinions to adopt the ruler's opinion,[97] but al-Qarāfī puts the issue mostly in the context of inter-personal relations. The reason is to resolve conflicts, as well as to avoid enmity and the spread of damage which contradicts the purpose behind the

[96] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rvu_QDJ01X0 accessed on January 9, 2014.

[97] Al-Qarāfī (1998:II,179) says, "Know that the judgment of the ruler in the matters of *ijtihād* (legal opinions) repeals the disagreement and the opponent (has to) change his opinion in favor of the opinion of the ruler (*iʿlam anna ḥukma 'l-ḥākim fī masāʾili 'l-ijtihād yarfaʿu 'l-khilāf, wa yarjiʿ al-mukhālifʿan madhhabih li-madhhabi 'l-ḥākim*).

appointment of rulers (Qarāfī 1998:II,179–80). Ibn Taimiyya (d. 728/1328) confirms that the ruler's opinion does not apply universally, although he might be seen as the most credible man in his time. It is binding for particular people who raised a certain issue to the ruler (ibn Taimiyya 2005:XXXV,218). It seems that Shihab is looking at the realization of public interest by introducing this legal postulate. He realizes, however, the fact that its implementation becomes problematic regarding the issue of *hilāl* in the Indonesian context, thus he proposes *ikhtilāf* itself as the trigger to create a greater benefit for Indonesian Muslims.

Shihab includes the differences on *hilāl* in the category of branches (*furūʿ*) where Muslims may differ with one another and religion recognizes those differences in such an issue as long as they appear from sincere purposes. To him, this occurs because there is no clear-cut instruction from the Qur'an or the *Sunna* about the details of determining *hilāl* (Shihab 2007:426–27). Shihab brings the question back to a rather Sufistic perspective regarding the main purpose of religious observances that is based on sincerity in seeking God's contentment. So, as far as the main purpose is concerned, there is no need in problematizing divergences with respect to the detailed implementation of fasting. The case of *ʿĪd al-Fiṭr* (the Feast of breaking the Fast) is likewise. A Muslim may fast or break according to his conviction about the day when Ramadan starts and ends. A Muslim may choose any opinion from any authority in this regard. Shihab says:

> There is one thing that can be ensured, that those who celebrate *ʿĪd al-Fiṭr* (*berlebaran*) on the day A have no less sincerity in practicing religious teachings than those who celebrate it on the day B. The difference exists only at the level of perspective, not at the purpose. We indeed differ in determining the day of *ʿĪd al-Fiṭr*, but not in the essence that it contains (Shihab 2007:428).

In this way, Shihab depicts *ikhtilāf* as mercy in twofold. First for the society, valuing *ikhtilāf* may become constitutive to the maintenance of public interest and social respect when agreement is inconceivable. And secondly for the individual, Shihab convinces that Muslim worship will not go in vain before God as long as it is sincerely performed. In other words, it is an emphasis that God does not see physical differences, but He sees the spiritual quality of man.

## Crossing School Boundaries

Valuing *ikhtilāf* may lead toward a tendency to what Ahmed Fekry Ibrahim (2011, 2013) has called "crossing school boundaries" which can be seen through what the Muslim jurists have termed *tatabbuʿ al-rukhaṣ*, or pursuing less stringent opinions from other schools, and *talfīq*, putting together opinions from two or more jurists on one legal case that may eventually create a new opinion which is never known in any existing school.

In the field of legal issues, Quraish Shihab authorizes the doctrine of *takhayyur* as frequently evident in his *fatāwā* where he intentionally provides his audiences with a number of options of legal opinions.[98] Indeed, such a viewpoint is still not popular among the majority of Muslims in Indonesia who expect that a religious scholar (*ʿālim*) can provide a straight opinion once he is asked.[99] *Fatāwā* issued by organizations often orient to give a firm opinion. Some even adopt a form of governmental decision or law, using such formal phrases as "referring to", "considering", and "it is decided that" in order to impose a sense of authority (Ichwan 2005:52).

In recent decades there has seemed to be a growing concern within particular segments of Indonesian Muslims regarding the position of *madhāhib* in Islam. This leads some to request Shihab for a ruling regarding the legality of changing *madhhab* or following several *madhāhib.* In his response, Shihab affirms that what is certain in Islam is following the commands of God and His Messenger as prescribed in the Qur'an and the *Sunna,* yet he understands that not everyone has the capability of comprehending the guidance of the revealed texts directly. According to him, a *madhhab* is by definition a way toward understanding the messages of the revealed texts. So, when man is unable to exercise *ijtihād*, he or she has to understand the arguments (*dalil-dalil*) of every religious ruling by a religious scholar in order to understand how a ruling is drawn. In this regard, man is following an opinion with

[98] Shihab deliberately provides his audience with several opinions regarding a particular religious subject when he sees that one opinion does not fit different situations that may be faced by members of Muslim society. Interview with Quraish Shihab on July 24, 2012 in Ciputat.

[99] Muntakhob Mustahdi, a graduate of Lirboyo *Pesantren* in East Java who currently runs his *pesantren* with his brothers in Cirebon, West Java, views that Quraish Shihab's legal opinions are rather unusual, because he very often does not give a clear opinion with regard to the question raised to him. On the contrary, he adds, people can get confused with the ambiguity of his opinions. A conversation with Muntakhob Mustahdi on August 15, 2012.

knowledge (*ittibā'*), but if he is still unable to understand the argument, he may follow whatever opinion of an expert with whom he finds confidence with the integrity and expertise of the scholar at stake (Shihab 2004:110, 2014a:731). Thus, he comes to argue that there is no such prohibition of changing *maddhab* or obligation to follow one *maddhab*, especially for lay Muslims who do not understand the arguments of religious rulings. Nevertheless, he highly recommends that choosing a *madhhab* should be based on sincerity, instead of a mere willingness to pursue the less stringent opinion (Shihab 2014a:731–32) that may be understood as playing with religion.

Another question raised to Shihab is related to the practice of mixing the doctrines of two or more *madhāhib* for one single set of worship (*talfīq*). It is a legal concept to indicate a particular type of school boundary crossing resulting in a new legal opinion after fusing different legal opinions.[100] *Talfīq* may result from *takhayyur* (selection among different opinions) that becomes widely adopted in modern times (Krawietz 2002:4; Wiederhold 1996:247). Shihab does not show his disagreement toward such practices, but for laymen he strongly recommends that they consult the matters with the experts. He appears to be very cautious when laymen, who have no adequate capacity of understanding the revealed texts and the arguments of Muslim jurists, practice *talfīq* arbitrarily. He says:

> It is called by the *'ulamā' talfīq*. Some of the *'ulamā'* permit it for laymen, while some others forbid it, if the purpose is merely to find easiness. To me, a layman has no *madhhab*. He has to ask those who have authority. Whatever the answer he receives, that is his *madhhab* (Shihab 2004:111).

## Muslim Women's Veiling, Between Religion and Custom

The question of women's attire[101] is probably the most controversial part of Shihab's legal opinion that confronts the mainstream.[102] In many occasions, it has

[100] For further discussions on *talfīq*, see for example Birgitz Krawietz's (2002) "Cut and Paste in Legal Rules: Designing Islamic Norms with *Talfiq*", Ahmed Fekry Ibrahim's (2011) *School Boundaries and Social Utility in Islamic Law: The Theory and Practice of Talfīq and Tatabbuʿ al-Rukhaṣ in Egypt.*

[101] As widely defined, Muslim women's attire can be any kind of dressing that covers the whole body of women, except their faces and palms of their hands. The style preferred by the average Indonesian Muslim women is a headscarf, which covers the hair, ears, neck and chest, with a long-sleeved and ankle-length garment, or with a long-sleeved blouse and ankle-length skirt or wide legged pants.

[102] The issue of Muslim women's attire is among the most debated issues within modern Muslim society. In the mid-1970s it reappeared as part of the growing Islamic consciousness in the Muslim world (Guindi 1995:110). In Indonesia the issue appeared in public debates in the 1980s, particularly in the case of female school students wearing headscarves (Juliastuti 2003:5). Following the success of "cultural Islamization" in the 1990s, wearing headscarves has become more common in the post-

been a target of criticism from the part of the proponents of veiling[103] for Muslim women. On September 21, 2006, for example, a panel discussion was held at Shihab's Centre for Qur'anic Studies (PSQ) to discuss his *Jilbab Pakaian Wanita Muslimah* (Veiling, Muslim Women's Attire), which was first published in 2004. In the panel, his critics criticized him on the grounds that he questions the boundary of women's *ʿaura* – part of Muslim women's body that must be covered properly – that has been clearly determined by the "consensus" of Muslims scholars. According to them, the Qur'an has explicitly commanded women to cover their whole body except what necessarily appears, which is understood by the majority as face and hands. According to his critics, the dissent might exist, but it is not about women's *ʿaura*, but rather about the limit of face, and hands that must be covered properly. The critics deplored such an opinion coming from a scholar with credentials in religious knowledge whose task should be orienting lay Muslims to the 'correct' teaching of religion rather than confusing them with various opinions. Shihab's opinion on women's attire is deemed by his critics to perceive women's *ʿaura* as conditional, local and temporal, rather than universal and final.[104] Accordingly, Islamic veiling, then, might be religiously understood as an unobligated practice.

Shihab has briefly discussed the question of Muslim women's attire in his *Wawasan al-Qur'an* and sequential commentary of *Tafsīr al-Miṣbāḥ*, especially Q. 24:31 and Q. 33:59, yet his extensive discussion on the topic is available in his work, *Jilbab*, in which he demonstrates various interpretations by Muslim scholars from the

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Suharto period that symbolizes religious piety in public space, and even is understood by the majority of Muslims as religious obligation.

[103] The word veiling in this study is used as a general term to designate women's clothing that covers most parts of their bodies. It is not used specifically to indicate a piece of fabric that covers women's faces (*niqāb*).

[104] The speakers were Quraish Shihab himself, Jalaluddin Rakhmat, Adian Husaini, and Elly Maliki. Adian Husaini, a Muslim activist and a preacher, and Elly Maliki, an Azhari graduate and an expert in Islamic law, both appeared to be strong opponents to Shihab's opinion in the panel. Husaini wrote his personal report about the panel, namely his 163rd weekly note (*Catatan Akhir Pekan*) entitled "*Mendiskusikan Jilbab di Pusat Studi al-Qur'an*" (Discussing the Headscarf at the Center for Qur'anic Studies).
http://www.hidayatullah.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3629&Itemid=55 Accessed on June 3, 2012. Several months before, March 28, 2006, the same discussion, which I also attended, was held in Cairo. The speakers were three Indonesian post-graduate students of al-Azhar, Muchlis M. Hanafi, Ahmad Zain an-Najah and Aep Syaifullah. All of the speakers disagreed with Shihab's opinion that veiling, for Muslim women, was a matter of dissent among Muslim jurists. I am indebted to my colleague, Aang Asy'ari who showed me his note "Buku Quraish Shihab dikritisi di Mesir" (Quraish Shihab's Book being Criticized in Egypt) as a comparison. Later, Zain an-Najah wrote a book *Jilbab Menurut Syari'at Islam* (Veiling in Islam) to criticize Shihab's *Jilbab*. An-Najah's book is available on his personal website http://www.ahmadzain.com/karyatulis/30.

classical to modern periods, but without giving preference to any opinion. He appears to frame the topic as a matter of legal difference (*ikhtilāf*) and likely intends to give the readers more flexibility with regard to this issue. What is interesting, as we shall see, is that he highlights the question of custom as a constitutive element to understand religious injunction.

In modern times, Muslim women's clothing is often termed *ḥijāb*, which is actually never used in the Qur'an to designate an article of clothing. Rather, it is meant to describe seclusion between men and the wives of the Prophet (Q. 33:53), deity from mortals (Q. 42:51), wrongdoers from the righteous (Q. 7:46), believers from unbelievers (Q. 17:45), light from darkness, and day from night (Q. 38:32). The Qur'an uses the terms *khimār* and *jilbāb*, which are familiar in the Arabian culture, to refer to modest and ethical clothing. The term *ḥijāb* with the meaning of head-covering is a post-Qur'anic innovation which gained significance in modern times; particularly in the 1970s as part of an emergent Islamic consciousness and movement that spread all over the Islamic word (Guindi 1995:109).

Shihab observes that the discourse on Islamic attire which arises in the modern period is triggered by the staging of religious consciousness in Muslim society, mode of fashion, and political expression (Shihab 2012a:xi–xii). He examines women's clothing through a discussion of the social and cultural context in which the Qur'anic text was revealed. His point of departure is that clothing is a product of culture and its style develops along with the development of its people. Shihab is convinced that veiling had been popular among female Arabs of the Prophet's time, but it was neither a monopoly of the Arabs nor the indigenous clothing in their culture. He views that women's veiling had appeared long before the coming of Islam, and had become part of the traditions and cultures of the Sassanians of Persia, the Hellenistic-Byzantine regions, as well as in India and surroundings (Shihab 2012a:40–1). Some Arab women in the pre- and early Islamic periods, Shihab contends, used to wear their dress in a way that could attract the attention of men. Some wore their headscarf but in a way that it was stretched out to their back, so that their jewelry and part of their bosom became visible because of their loose unfitted garment (Shihab 2012a:46, 2014b:228). The Qur'anic text, then, addressed this situation by giving ethical guidance.

Referring to some reports, Shihab highlights the context when the hypocrites and mashers used to approach and tempt women when they were going out at night to relieve themselves. Some thought that those women were slaves from the way they dressed. Corresponding to that situation, the Qur'anic text (Q. 33:59)[105] was sent down, ordering the Prophet's wives, daughters, and Muslim women to bring down over themselves part of their outer garments (*jalābīb*, sing. *jilbāb*). The purpose was to distinguish them from female slaves and thereby not be sexually harassed (Shihab 2012a:86, 2012b:X,533, 2014b:227). In this regard, a notion of respectable clothing was introduced. Shihab observes that most Muslim scholars employed the verse as a religious obligation upon Muslim women not only in the Prophet's time, but also in the following periods. However, modernist Muslims comprehend that the verse is binding only to the Prophet's wives, daughters, and Muslim women at the period where the social distinction was needed. The obligation ceases accordingly with the absence of slaves in the modern age (Shihab 2012a:88–9).[106]

The only Qur'anic verse that mentions the parts of a woman's body that must be covered in the public space is Q. 24:31, "*And tell the believing women to reduce [some] of their vision and guard their private parts and not expose their adornment (zīna) except that which [necessarily] appears thereof and to wrap [a portion of] their head-covers over their chests.*" This verse is most frequently referred to in order to determine the evident religious injunction of women's veiling. Shihab highlights two important aspects: first, the meaning of *zīna* (adornment) and its exception (*istithnā'*), and second, the command to wrap the head-cover Muslim women used to wear over their bosom.

Shihab contends that in Arabic, *zīna* means something that makes some other things beautiful and lovely, or simply adornment (Shihab 2012a:97, 2012b:VIII,527). At a glance it might cover earrings, necklaces, bracelets, mascara, etc., but Shihab, however, does not confine the word to its lexical meaning, but extends its meaning to

[105] *"O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to bring down over themselves [part] of their outer garments. That is more suitable that they will be known and not be abused. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful."*

[106] Before the emergence of Islam, the veil for women was regarded as a sign of respectability and high status. It was used to distinguish respectable women from female slaves and unchaste women. The latter, indeed, were forbidden to wear the veil. Cultural contacts gradually spread the veil to the Arabs of the urban upper classes before they eventually became a commonplace item of clothing among the general urban public (Ahmed 1992:4; Guindi 1995:108).

the metaphorical meaning. In relation to women's bodies, it means particular parts of women's bodies and clothing that might stimulate the attention of men (Shihab 2012a:93). Thus, *zīna* is divided into congenital (*khilqiyya*) and acquired (*muktasaba*) adornments. Women's physical bodies belong to the *khilqiyya*, while earrings, necklaces, bracelets, anklets, and mascara are put in the category of *muktasabah.*

The exception in the verse suggests that there are some parts of women's adornments that might be exposed during their public duty, but the verse does not mention them in more detail. This is the central question and Shihab responds with various interpretations from Muslim exegetes which brings the exception back to the "custom", but which custom? Is it the custom of the Arabs in which the Qur'an was revealed or is it any custom of different societies? The majority of Muslim scholars, particularly the pre-modern (*al-mutaqaddimūn*), have brought the definition of custom back to the custom of the revelation period. With reference to some Prophetic traditions, they come to the conclusion that only the face and palms of women's hands might be exposed in public (Shihab 2012b:VIII,533, 2014b:234–35).

The majority's opinion that defines the custom as that of the Prophet's Arabs is not convincing for Shihab. It not only contradicts the notion that the Qur'an "speaks to all generations", but is also inconsistent with the idea that clothing is a matter of culture. He re-examines the discourse of veiling among classical Muslim scholars. Various sources from the Prophetic tradition, regardless of their authenticity, indeed suggest that the Muslim women should cover their bodies, except their faces and palms (Shihab 2012a:157). This has led most Muslim scholars to argue that women's *'aura* is their whole body except these two parts. Shihab follows the discourse in its earliest development within the Ḥanafī School. He finds that Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767) introduced a different opinion saying that women's feet are not part of their *'aura* and, thereby, might be uncovered on the grounds that the coverage might cause difficulties for working women in the rural areas. Meanwhile, Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798), one of Abū Ḥanīfa's important pupils, contends that the lower arms of women might be uncovered as well (Shihab 2012a:198, 2012b:VIII,531, 2014b:233). Mentioning the opinions of Abū Ḥanīfa and Abū Yūsuf, Shihab likely intends to shed some light on the shifts in the Muslim classical discourse and interpretation of women's clothing. Such shifts might also occur in any period depending on people's

concept of respectable clothing and the necessity to carry out their activities in a proper way.

Moreover, Shihab finds out that Ibn ʿAṭiyya (d. 541/1146), an Andalusian exegete and judge, has laid down a formulation with regard to the question of women's clothing. The basic premise, according to Ibn ʿAṭiyya, is that women should not expose their adornments. In his view, the exception of unveiling in Q. 24:31 must be seen as necessity for their movement or adjustment to women's condition. Shihab then highlights that the exception can be developed depending on the degree of necessity encountered by Muslim women in different times (Shihab 2012b:VIII,532, 2014b:234). Personally, Ibn ʿAṭiyya is more inclined to the exception of face and hands however, Shihab does not mention it in his citation of Ibn ʿAṭiyya. It does not mean that Shihab is totally dishonest with Ibn ʿAṭiyya's opinion, for the latter made the exception from his reflection on the tradition and custom of his era, where women used to uncover their face and palms (ibn ʿAṭiyya 2001:IX,178).[107]

Additionally, Shihab is also indebted to a prominent Tunisian jurist and exegete, Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn ʿĀshūr (1879-1973), especially regarding the topics of the purposes of the *sharīʿa* and the relation between religion and custom. Ibn ʿĀshūr affirms that religion does not aim at determining the Muslim way of clothing, housing, and transport, because "customs of a particular people – in their capacity as conventional practices – should not be imposed on other people in the name of religious legislation (*tashrīʿ*) and even on the owners of the customs likewise" (ibn ʿĀshūr 2001:322). Religious legislation that is coincidentally pertinent to the custom of a people should be seen from the impetus of adopting the custom in question and, accordingly, the purpose of religion with that legislation. Ibn Ashur gives an example of Q. 33:59 concerning a command of wearing *jilbāb* where religion observes the custom of the Prophet's Arabs to deliver its message. "This is guidance (*sharʿ*) in which the tradition of the Arabs was taken into consideration. Then those people,

[107] "*... anna al-marʾata maʾmūratun bi-an lā tubdiya wa-an tajtahida fī 'l-ikhfaʾ li-kulli mā huwa zīna, wa waqaʿa 'l-istithnāʾ fī-kulli mā ghalabahā, fa-ẓahara bi-ḥukmi ḍarūrati ḥaraka fī-mā lā budda minhu au iṣlāḥu shaʾn wa naḥwi zālik ... fa-ghālibu 'l-amr anna 'l-wajha bi-mā fīhi wa 'l-kaffain yakthuru fīhimā al-ẓuhūr...*" See Ibn ʿAṭiyya's interpretation of Q. 24:31 in his commentary *al-Muḥarrir al-Wajīz.* Quraish Shihab consults Ibn ʿAṭiyya's interpretation from al-Qurṭubī's commentary, *al-Jāmiʿ liʾAḥkām al-Qurʾān.*

who do not wear *jalābīb* (sing. *jilbāb*) [as tradition], do not belong to this legislation" (ibn ʿĀshūr 2001:323; Shihab 2012b:VIII,533).[108]

For Shihab, ibn ʿĀshūr's formulation regarding the relation between religion and custom is highly relevant to address the contemporary question of Muslim women's attire. The convergence of religion and the Arabs' custom should be seen from the purpose of religion rather than merely physical implementation. As clothing is a matter of custom, Shihab aims to ascertain that the definition of custom, which becomes the basis of exception in Q. 24:31, can be extended to the "custom" of the contemporary era. If it is the case, the religious purpose in women's attire, which lies in modesty and the absence of stimulating factors to the other sex, can be implemented in any kind of clothing other than *jilbāb.* Moreover, he finds that Ibn ʿĀshūr has mentioned the opinion of an anonymous scholar, stating that the exception might cover feet and hair (ibn ʿĀshūr 1984:XVIII,207; Shihab 2012b:VIII,528).

Whatever the interpretation is, Shihab is likely willing to underline that the explicit command in the verse is to cover women's chests, while a command to cover women's heads is absent from the text, "*... and to wrap [a portion of] their head-covers over their chests.*" Thus, the Qur'an corresponded to the clothing custom of the Arabs at the time, where women already wore their head-covering. Thus the verse intended to give moral guidance concerning the ethics of clothing in the public space with a command of dropping a portion of their veil over their bosom.

Moreover, Shihab highlights the imperative form (*amr*) employed by the Qur'an when dealing with the topic of women's clothing. It becomes a common understanding among Muslim jurists that the imperative form in the Qur'an, as well as the Prophetic tradition, does not always imply a meaning of religious obligation. The imperative form is also used to express recommendation, preference, or guidance. He equates the case of veiling with that of debt transaction where the command does not necessarily imply obligation (Shihab 2012b:VIII,534, 2014b:237), but merely as a recommendation (*anjuran*) and guidance. Shihab points out that Islam is much more concerned with the ethics of clothing; modest and respectable clothing

[108] It seems that Shihab finds the opinion of Ibn ʿĀshūr on this matter highly relevant for his formulation of the question of women's attire. To borrow an intellectual backing from Ibn Ashur, Shihab explicitly calls him "a great contemporary scholar and the Muftī of Tunisia whose authority is acknowledged in the Islamic world" (Shihab 2014b:219, 236).

(*pakaian terhormat*) that does not inflict sexual stimulation (Shihab 2012a:429). To him, wearing the head-cover is recommendable, as it literally corroborates the literal redaction of the revealed texts. Yet, he views that it might have exceeded from what is required by religion. He says:

> "Finally we might say that the women covering all parts of their bodies except their face and hands are those who [literally] implement the verse, even probably have exceeded it. But at the same time, we should not claim that those, who do not wear headscarves or reveal part of their hands, have definitely violated religion. Doesn't the Qur'an mention the limits of *ʿaura* [part of human body to be covered]? Muslim scholars themselves dissent when discussing it" (Shihab 2012b:VIII,534).

As such, Shihab provides a theological ground for Muslim women who do not cover their heads. Again he affirms the importance of valuing *ikhtilāf*, calling those who believe in the obligation of veiling to respect those who do not wear the headscarf because according to him, both are lawful as long as the wearers pay attention to what he calls "respectable clothing".

## Conclusion

*Iftāʾ* becomes evidence that the authority of a religious scholar is publicly approved. Enjoying this prestigious status, Quraish Shihab acts as a *mujtahid* does, exercising direct reasoning of the Qur'an, particularly, and the *Sunna* which in modern times has been strongly advocated by the enlightened Muslim reformists of Muḥammad ʿAbduh's school. Shihab's encounter with the intellectual tradition of the new scholasticism obviously occurred when he was a student at al-Azhar in Cairo. Working on the basis of direct argumentation with the revealed texts, Shihab is ready to adopt some principles, such as *maṣlaḥa* (public interest) and *taisīr* (lenience), which lend to the foundation of religious adaptability with regard to different social settings. Interestingly still, he devises the legal concept of *ikhtilāf* to be a source of mercy in a concrete way to bring benefits to the Muslim community. This is evident from his frequent reluctance to give legal preference (*tarjīḥ*) when he encounters divergences in legal opinion, but gives discretion to the Muslim community to choose whatever opinion befits their personal convictions. Shihab adopts *ikhtilāf* unqualifiedly, regardless of the boundaries between different schools.

## Chapter 3

# Interpreting the Qur'an in the Context of the Indonesian Nation-state

The 20th century testifies to the dramatic decline of world empires with the emergence of nation-states as an uncontested hegemony of political sovereignty. The Ottoman Empire, which represents a Muslim world political power, dissolved in the 1920s. The dissolution is often seen as a major setback of Muslim political power and the caliphate system. In addition, it left the fact that the imperial European powers were the only dominant powers to instill a strong influence in their colonized territories. However, this domination was soon followed by the end of the colonization era in the second part of the century, which brought about the emergence of nation-states in the former colonized territories, including in the Muslim world. The adoption of nation-state raises questions among Muslims for it requires political unity based on worldly factors: race, culture, and language (Piscatori 1986). This kind of unity was seen particularly by the proponents of the caliphate and *sharīʿa*-based legal system to have contradicted the idea of a single Muslim community (*umma*). For them, the adoption of the nation-state in the Muslim world left a bitter reality in the sense that most of those newly formed nation-states lean toward the adoption of legal codes from the colonial legacy rather than the divine law.[109]

[109] The *sharīʿa* is not the only source of law employed during the period of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman rulers, beginning from Mehmed II (r. 1444-1446; 1451-1481), also employed a positive legal system that co-existed with the *sharīʿa*, namely *Kanun*, which was enacted in order to accommodate the empire's expanding needs in the fields of human interactions. In theory, the *Kanun* was to complement and to supplement the *sharīʿa*; it contained rules that were not covered or left unspecified by the *sharīʿa*. During the *Kanuni* period, the Ottoman rulers acted as personages who had the authority to enact law (Veinstein 2013:325). In the 19th century, the Ottoman rulers saw the necessity of reform in order to modernize the empire. The *Majalla* that took a form of the modern European legal code was enacted as the Ottoman civil code. It was codified primarily based on the Ḥanafī legal tradition, incorporating transactions, contracts and obligation, but leaving out the family matters (Yılmaz and Gündoğdu 2013:74). The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire was mourned by those who were in line with the Islamist ideas on the contention that the caliphate was the system that could restore Islamic order and uphold the *sharīʿa*. Hizb al-Taḥrīr (the Liberation Party), which was founded by Taqī al-Dīn al-Nabhānī (1909-1977), is an international pan-Islamic political organization that overtly advocates revival of the caliphate system. Al-Nabhānī's worldview, as Suha Taji-Farouki

The question of the nation-state and the relation between state and religion has become one of the central political issues in the modern history of Indonesia. Covering a huge diversity of cultures, religions, and ethnic groups, Indonesia declared its independence as a free state on August 17, 1945 with *Pancasila* (the Five Principles) as its philosophical foundation and ideology after heated debates between two major contending factions: the Islamic nationalists (*golongan Islam*) and the 'secular' nationalists (*golongan kebangsaan*). The adoption of Pancasila means that the Indonesian state remains neutral from any official religious attachment. The struggle for Islamic ends continued after the declaration of independence, which was sometimes put in a confrontational position against the state. This can be seen from the rebellious movement of *Darul Islam* during Sukarno's period (1945-1966) as well as from other clandestine Islamist movements during Suharto's period (1966-1998). In the post-Suharto period, Islamist movements openly came to the fore, aspiring for "*sharī'atization*" in the country either in its present political institution or through promoting an Islamic caliphate. The modern history of Indonesia is evidently marked by the contestation of both factions, although the 'secular' nationalist agenda always gains greater support from the citizens.

This chapter discusses how the Qur'anic text is articulated by Quraish Shihab to address contemporary questions within the context of the nation-state and the fate of religion within a modern construction of political sovereignty. Shihab effectively started to discuss contemporary issues in the light of the Qur'an when he moved to Jakarta, the capital city with distinct political and intellectual dynamics. Having fortune with the political turn toward Islam in the 1990s, he had the opportunity to deliver his monthly lecture in front of Muslim executives and state officials at the Istiqlal Mosque, which was organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs.[110] Although Shihab might discuss contemporary issues in a way that corresponds to his own approach to the Islamic revealed texts, his articulation of religion cannot be

(1996:189–90) suggests, reflected the major concerns of his generation between the aspiration to terminate the European colonial rule and the reassertion of the integrity of the self through a search for indigenous alternatives to Western models. If Muslim Brotherhood advocates for the gradual Islamization of society through grassroots activities that will create an Islamic order under the *sharī'a* out of which the Islamic state will eventually emerge, *Hizb al-Taḥrīr*, in contrast, believes that such an order will not appear without first establishing the Islamic caliphate.

[110] Most of his lectures at the Istiqlal Mosque were later compiled in his books *Wawasan al-Qur'an* (Qur'anic Insights) and *Secercah Cahaya Ilahi* (A Glimpse of Divine Light).

exclusively separated from the context of Indonesian political debates on Islam and state, and the state definition of common good for itself.

## Religion, Indonesian Nation-State and National Common Good

The establishment of the Indonesian nation-state was a fruit of modern nationalism that flamed in the archipelago particularly in the early 20th century. Expressed in various political ideologies, Indonesian nationalism, as frequently argued, emerged as a common sense response to end the Dutch control over the archipelago.[111] From a technical point of view, the creation of the Indonesian nation-state was preceded by extensive discussions among Indonesian leaders upon a proposed national ideology or basis that could serve as the philosophical foundation for the state. Ideological competition did exist among the founding fathers, but it seemed to be of marginal importance when they arrived at a common understanding about the common good that they were eager to achieve in the foreseeable future; putting together all the territories under the Dutch in Southeast Asia into one sovereign, independent state.

Ideology, which is generally defined as a set of ideas that form a normative and empirical basis for individual or group aspirations and actions,[112] is often seen as

[111] George McTurnan Kahin (1966:38–41) highlights several factors that contributed to the growth of an integrated first nationalism in the 20th century of Indonesia. One of the most important factors was the high degree of religious homogeneity that prevailed in Indonesia. Islam was not only a common bond, but also a symbol of struggle against any intruder and oppressor of a different religion. Another important factor was the development of the Malay language as a lingua franca in the archipelago. In addition, the integration of Indonesian nationalism was, to some extent, indebted to the existence of the *Volksraad* (People's Council), which was actually installed in 1918, as the top representative council for all of Indonesia. It contributed to bringing together Indonesians from various parts of the archipelago and made them aware of their common problems and their common relationship with the Dutch. And finally, the growth of nationalism was considerably enhanced by the use of the press and radio for idea dissemination. The earlier 20th century witnessed a new territorial definition of Indonesia and the emergence of the anti-colonial and reform movements which came from various political ideologies such as Pan-Islamism and Marxism, as well as from religious and ethnic identities. Each struggled for its own goal, until Indonesian leaders eventually found that there were things that could unite them which were more important than the issues that divided them. Accordingly, some leaders began to think of all the peoples of Indonesia as their constituency and Indonesia's independence as their common goal (Ricklefs 2001:206–26).

[112] There has been disagreement among scholars concerning the conceptual definition of the term ideology. First coined by the French philosopher Antoine Destutt de Tracy (1754 – 1836) during the French Revolution to indicate "science of ideas", it was then used with a pejorative connotation in the early 19th century to designate ideas that could be threats for the ruling power. Karl Marx (1818–1883) gives a different definition of it, for he viewed ideology as the ideas of the ruling capitalist class. In a similar view, Karl Mannheim (1893–1947) labeled ideology as the conservative, interest-based, and biased ideas of the dominant class in a society. Reo M. Christenson and friends offers a definition of

highly important for a modern construction of the nation-state. Ideology gives a nation a distinct national identity that instills commonalities, and symbolizes a social imagination among its citizens which could function as a source of strength and inspiration to achieve its social, economic, and political ends. The power of an ideology derives from the feeling it arouses, the action it incites, and the human energies it unleashes (Christenson 1972:6).

Here we will discuss how the Indonesian national common good is invested and manifested in the state philosophical foundation and ideology, the Five Pillars (*Pancasila*), how Pancasila is constantly articulated to represent the national common good, and how it is made a reference for the creation of other goods within the context of the Indonesian nation-state.

Defining the common good, what it consists of, and how it is constituted and best realized is a matter of contestation in any given society (Zaman 2004:130). In his critique of communitarianism that tends to define the common good based on the contention of the dominant group, Craig Calhoun (1998:20), an American sociologist, suggests that in considering the public good,[113] one needs "to think more clearly of the public as a realm or realms of discourse and contestation within which both identities and interests are constituted." Calhoun views that discussions of the public good generally tend to put emphasis more on an image of similarity under a certain category rather than the more differentiated relations among members of concrete social networks and interdependent social systems. This might end with either identifying "the underlying commonalities that constitute the public as a category of similar persons", or charging such commonalities with coercion. Accordingly, the idea of the public as a realm of differences among its interlocutors is missing from this perspective (Calhoun 1998:23). Therefore, Calhoun emphasizes a more "democratic" atmosphere in the process of creating and nurturing the public good by considering modes of discourse that may go beyond the affirmation of commonality.

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political ideology, that is "a belief system that explains and justifies a preferred political order for society, either existing or proposed, and offers a strategy for its attainment" (Christenson 1972:2–5).

[113] In this chapter I would rather use the term "common good". Whether or not "common good" differs from "public good" is not important in my discussion concerning the processes through which the Indonesian founding fathers came to an agreement about the state philosophical foundation that represents the national common good, and depicts the collective imagination of the Indonesian people.

In this regard, I wish to appropriate parts of Calhoun's thought on the common good – or the public good – in my discussion on Pancasila that underlies the establishment of the Indonesian state. It is to shed some light on how the public – people's representatives in this regard – was constituted as a realm of social and political differences, and entered to argue with one another in order to determine the national identity of the state that covered a huge diversity of the people living in the archipelago.

Islam under the Dutch colonial period was put under serious pressure. Bringing the past prejudices against Islam, the Dutch colonial government apprehended that Muslims – especially the 'fanatic' ones – could form a possible serious threat for its colonial agenda. It sought to place restrictions on Indonesian Muslims, especially on the Mecca pilgrims, who were seen as responsible for spreading agitation and rebellion in Indonesia. To eliminate the influence of Islam among Indonesians, the colonial government supported Christian missionaries to operate in the archipelago and promoted the Dutch culture that was expected to create a feeling of content among Indonesians with the Dutch rule. In addition, the fear of Islam led them to shape a policy of alliance with the indigenous aristocrats and *adat* (custom, ethnic) chiefs, who were seen to have less commitment to Islam (Benda 1958:19–26; Noer 1973:21–2). Harry J. Benda gives his analysis that the arrival of the Japanese in 1942 finished the dominant political role of aristocracy that had become the cornerstone of the Dutch colonial system for centuries. Taking a different move from the Dutch precedent that put Islam under strict control, the Japanese initially seemed more ready to give concessions to the Islamic nationalists in an attempt to infuse their influence at the bottom of the society. Only very late in their occupation did the Japanese show their increasing and decisive support to the secular nationalists (Benda 1958:199–202; Boland 1982:8–9).

A few months before the declaration of independence on August 17, 1945, there had been processes of consolidation that aimed at preparing what was considered necessary for the creation of an independent state. A committee called the "Investigating Body for Preparatory Work for Indonesian Independence" (*Badan Penyelidik Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia*, BPUPKI), which was formed by the Japanese government on April 29, 1945 following its intention to grant independence to the Indonesian people, held consecutive meetings from May to July

1945 to discuss several issues concerning the form and the structure of the would-be state, its ideology, its constitution, and the relation between state and religion. Though agreeing upon the point of making the former territories under the Dutch political control a sovereign free state, the members of the committee differed upon whether Islam should be the foundation and ideology of the state. The members were divided between the secular nationalists and the Islamic nationalists. The secular nationalists –consisting of Muslims and non-Muslims – firmly upheld the neutrality of the state, whereas the Islamic nationalists insisted that Islam should be the basis of the state on the grounds that the majority of Indonesian people were Muslims and they contributed greatly to the struggle for independence (Ismail 1995:45).[114] We should not be confused, however, that the secular nationalists were anti-religion. Indeed, they personally might not lack in religious sentiments and consciousness. They just regarded Islam as personal devotion, not as an ideological system to put in the area of politics and state.

Some members were given the opportunity to deliver their speech during the meetings. In his speech on June 1, 1945, Sukarno (1901-1970) introduced Pancasila (from two Sanskrit words: *panca*, five and *sila*, principle) as a set of values that could serve as the state philosophical foundation. Sukarno's Pancasila seemed to be the most plausible proposal for this end. Yet, the Islamic nationalists objected to his formulation of it which consists of nationalism (*kebangsaan*), humanitarianism (*internasionalisme*), deliberation (*mufakat*), social welfare (*kesejahteraan*) and belief in God (*ketuhanan*), because in their view there was no explicit Islamic formulation in it.[115] A smaller committee consisting of nine members – Sukarno, Muhammad Hatta, Muhammad Yamin, Ahmad Soebardjo, A.A. Maramis (representing the secular nationalists), Abikusno Tjokrosujoso, Abdul Kahar Muzakkir, Agus Salim and Abdul Wahid Hasyim (representing the Islamic nationalists) – held a meeting on June 22,

[114] George McTurnan Kahin (1966:38) gives an account that over 90 percent of the population in the Indonesian archipelago was Muslim. This high degree of religious homogeneity that prevailed at the time constitutes an important force for the emergence of Indonesian nationalism, counteracting parochial tendencies that might have become strong at the time, as well.

[115] Studies on the preparatory processes during the first session of the BPUPKI's meetings are mainly based on Muhammad Yamin's record. Unfortunately, in his work Yamin does not include the speeches made by Islamic leaders, such as Ki Bagus Hadikusumo, K.H. Mas Mansur, Abdul Wahid Hasyim and H. Agus Salim. It records only the speeches of three orators: Yamin himself, Supomo and Sukarno (Boland 1982:23). Thus, we could not discuss in further details what the Islamic leaders really proposed for the foundation and structure of Indonesian state, except general ideas on the proposal of Islam as an official religion of the state and the *sharī'a* should be imposed on Muslim citizens.

1945 to look for an agreement. After reformulation and rearrangement, a "gentlemen's agreement" (Anshari 1976; Boland 1982) was eventually reached with a document known as "*Piagam Jakarta*" (the Jakarta Charter) that later became the preamble of the 1945 draft Constitution. The document reads:

> Belief in God with the obligation to implement the Islamic *sharīʿa* upon its adherents
>
> Just and civilized humanity
>
> The unity of Indonesia
>
> Democracy guided by the inner wisdom arising from representative deliberation
>
> Social justice for the whole of the Indonesian people

Islamic formulation is strongly evident in the first principle "Belief in God" that is followed by the phrase "with the obligation to implement the *sharīʿa* upon its adherents", which is popularly known in modern history of Indonesia as the "seven words" proposed by the Islamic leaders as an attempt to impose the Islamic law in the country. In fact, the insertion aroused objections from the secular nationalist faction in the forum, particularly from the Christian leaders, on the grounds that such Islamic formula could bring considerable consequences regarding other religions, and could lead to difficulties concerning the relation with the customary law (Boland 1982:28; Ismail 1995:52), but Sukarno reminded the forum of great difficulties in achieving the agreement. Thus he insisted that it might be taken as accepted. The Investigating Body was then dissolved on August 7, 1945, after its success of drafting a constitution.

However, those "seven words" were eventually removed during the meeting of the Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence (*Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia*, PPKI) on August 18, 1945, one day after the proclamation of independence, after considering objections from Christians living in the eastern parts of Indonesia. They threatened to remain outside the Republic if the Islamic formula existed in the preamble and the body of the Constitution. In the face of this serious matter, Muhammad Hatta, with whom the Islamic nationalists had firm confidence had the initiative to discuss the matter with the representatives of the Islamic nationalists: Ki Bagus Hadikusumo, Wahid Hasjim, Kasman Singodimedjo and Teuku Muhammad Hasan (Boland 1982:35; Ismail 1995:55). The lobby resulted in the removal of the explicit Islamic formula. Thus the first principle of Pancasila as shown in the

preamble of the 1945 Constitution reads "Belief in One and Only God". With this new formula, for the secular nationalist the state remained neutral, and for the Islamic nationalists, it still corroborated the Islamic doctrine of monotheism (*tauḥīd*). More importantly still, a great and crucial challenge to the creation of a unitary state could be peacefully resolved.

What is interesting from the creation process of Pancasila is that national unity from the very beginning constituted the "common good" which the founding fathers were willing to realize, despite their different political orientations. They shared the same social and political imagination about the land that they struggled for and that became their ultimate goal. Nationalism in the early 20th century had nurtured and strengthened what Benedict Anderson (2006:6) calls an "imagined political community". Sukarno himself insisted that if Pancasila had to be compressed and shortened, it would be one Indonesian genuine phrase, namely *gotong-royong* or mutual help (Boland 1982:22). The phrase clearly indicates a notion of unity among the elements of the nation. Moreover, a prominent figure who represented the Islamic nationalists, Haji Agoes Salim (1951:123), explicitly expressed the importance of unity. He was convinced that Indonesia was established based on unity of motherland (*tanah air*), of nation (*bangsa*) and of language (*bahasa*). Above all, according to Salim, the unity of motherland is the most fundamental one.

The 1945 Constitution remained in force until being replaced by the Federal Constitution on December 27, 1949, and then later by the Provisional Constitution on August 17, 1950. In the preamble of both constitutions, Pancasila is made in a shorter formulation: Belief in One and Only God, Humanitarianism, Nationalism, Democracy, and Social Justice. The 1950s was a crucial period for ideological struggle. In order to realize their political aspiration to create an "Islamic state", the struggle of Islamic leaders did not cease with Indonesia's independence. The ideological contestation reached the parliamentary level when the Constitutional Assembly (*Konstituante*) was formed in 1955 to create a new constitution. The intense contestation between the secular nationalists and the Islamic factions brought about a deadlock in formulating a new constitution. Concerned with the political situation, President Sukarno proposed a return to the 1945 Constitution, which was made officially through his decree on July 5, 1959. The decree dissolved the Constitutional Assembly and imposed

a return to the 1945 Constitution, which meant the return of Pancasila in its first official promulgation in August 1945.

Following this return, Sukarno implemented what he called "guided democracy", which according to him is a family-based democracy based on mutual consultation led by one central authority that leads and protects, but does not dictate (Ismail 1995:105–06). Sukarno's guided democracy provided him with enormous power and authority. He held not only executive authority, but also legislative and judicative functions. His critics, among them Mohammad Hatta (1902-1980), criticized him for his guided democracy exposed centralized power in him rather than implemented in democracy as suggested by Pancasila (Ismail 1995:106). As far as the guided democracy was concerned, Sukarno could use his authority to purge all challenges that might trouble his revolutionary agenda. Pancasila, among other things, was employed as the reason to extinguish any movement that in his view could endanger the unity of Indonesia.

The *Darul Islam* rebellion from the late 1940s until the early 1960s, for instance, aimed at creating an Islamic state in the Indonesian territory. The rebellion, which was centralized in West Java under Kartosuwirjo (1905-1962), in South Sulawesi under Kahar Muzakkar (1920-1965) and in Aceh under Daud Beureu'eh (1899-1987), was deemed a serious threat for the Republic. The Islamic State of Indonesia (*Negara Islam Indonesia*, NII) was proclaimed on August 7, 1949 and Kartosuwirjo became its *imam*, the head of the state. The NII had its own constitution and made the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition run as the highest foundational source of law. In order to realize its ideal, the NII used military guerrillas. The rebellion was seen as a serious challenge to the Proclamation and Pancasila (Boland 1982:62) which constituted the basis of the nascent state's nationalism and the basis for the unity of Indonesia's diversity. By the early 1960s, the rebellion was gradually resolved. In 1959 Aceh was made as a special autonomous province through a peaceful process. Daud Beureu'eh lived as an ordinary citizen, devoting himself for the development of his homeland. Meanwhile, Kartosuwirjo was executed in 1962, and Kahar Muzakkar was shot to death in 1965.

The Masyumi Party, which struggled constitutionally for an Islamic cause during Sukarno's period, was finally banned in 1960 because the government viewed

that some of its prominent leaders, such as Syafruddin Prawiranegara (1911 – 1989), Burhanuddin Harahap (1917 – 1987) and Muhammad Natsir (1908 – 1993), were involved in a rebellious movement of the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia (*Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia*, PRRI) in Sumatra in 1958. The proclamation of PRRI was seen by the central government in Jakarta as open challenge to the idea of the Unitary State of Indonesia (Elson 2008:196).

Sukarno now began to introduce the NASAKOM doctrine (an Indonesian acronym for *Nasionalisme* [nationalism], *Agama* [religion] and *Komunisme* [communism]) that corresponded to his old article of 1926[116] as political jargon to display the unity of the existing national powers. The doctrine apparently meant that the Indonesian National Party (PNI), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and the Indonesian Communist Party, or PKI, should share a role in government. PKI, with which the army and Muslim leaders had enmity, dominated the political stage, especially after Sukarno launched open confrontation with the Western powers and established a close relationship with the communist axis. However, the failed coup that broke out on September 30, 1965 and caused the murder of some high-ranking army generals put PKI into a difficult position, blamed as the actor behind the assassination. Holding the mandate to secure national stability from President Sukarno, General Suharto (1921-2008), the commander of the Army Strategic Reserve (KOSTRAD), launched a campaign of extermination against PKI, in which Muslims showed significant contribution.[117] The success of ousting the alleged treason of PKI was later commemorated each year on October 1 by the New Order government as the Day of Pancasila's Mighty (*Hari Kesaktian Pancasila*).

Expecting political changes within the new regime, Islamic leaders made an effort for pressing the legalization of the Jakarta Charter as the preamble to the 1945 constitution. Yet, it ended without any success. Muslim contributions in crushing the PKI were not regarded by Suharto's regime (Boland 1982:153; Ricklefs 2001:357).

[116] Sukarno's old article entitled "Nationalism, Islam and Marxism" argued that these three major political trends could work together to realize unity that could bring the nation into its greatness. Further reading see, Sukarno's (1984) *Nationalism, Islam and Marxism*, translated by Karel H. Warouw.

[117] People affiliated with NU were involved in mass killings in East Java. At a meeting in Jakarta in November 1965, Muhammadiyah proclaimed that the extermination of communism constituted Holy War (Ricklefs 2001:347). In Aceh, groups that were earlier affiliated with *Darul Islam* were among the first to stand against the communist party. *Majlis Ulama* (the *'Ulamā'* council) issued a *fatwā* forbidding communism, and people became involved in killing the communists (Aspinall 2009:51).

Suharto vetoed the plan for the revival of Masyumi and forced the fusion of the remaining Islamic parties into one single party in 1973, namely the United Development Party (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan*, PPP), which was practically controlled by the government accomplices.

To maintain national stability and economic development, the military-backed New Order government applied what it called the "Pancasila democracy". It suppressed any political movements that were not in line with its political ideology, including political Islam. The only major challenge of political Islam during this period was probably a revolt in Aceh. Motivated by dissatisfaction with the central government policy in Aceh, Hasan di Tiro (1925-2010) founded Free Aceh Movement (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*, GAM) by accommodating some former *Darul Islam* supporters who were already considering reviving their resistance to Jakarta. The former *Darul Islam* leader, Daud Beureueh, had been reported to at least passively endorse the plan for a renewed revolt to uphold the Islamic state in Aceh (Aspinall 2009:59–60). For the Indonesian government at the time, GAM was seen as a separatist movement that intended to create an Islamic state in northwest tip of Sumatra. Although it was founded on the remnant of *Darul Islam* and its members were devout Muslims, GAM – as observers suggest – actually never intended to create an Islamic state or the imposition of Islamic law (Aspinall 2009; Kingsbury 2007). Whatever happened in Aceh regarding GAM, the New Order government used a repressive approach to solve the problem.

Frustrated with the current political situation, many Muslim leaders withdrew from politics and decided to be more concerned with religious social and cultural missions. Consequently, Indonesia after 1965 witnessed an intensification of religious commitment among Indonesian Muslims (Ricklefs 2001:343) which later strengthened cultural Islam and contributed, to a certain degree, to the emergence of various religious groups and movements in the post-New Order period.

The Pancasila democracy, as defined by the New Order government, was a democratic system based on family spirit and mutual cooperation intended to achieve social welfare. In religious life, it rejected atheism, but strongly advocated religious tolerance. In social life, it proposed harmony between individuals and society (Ismail 1995:118). To achieve its goals, the government vigorously exercised a national

indoctrination program or initiative to inculcate Pancasila values in all citizens, particularly students and civil servants. The decision might be understood as a protection of Pancasila, but the government, indeed, resorted to it as a means of social and political control, and repression (Azra 2006:234). The legal basis for the New Order's repressive approach to the "ideologization" of Pancasila was the People's Consultative Assembly's decision No. II/1978 on the Guideline for the Realization and Implementation of Pancasila (P4) behind which Suharto was considered the initiating force (Morfit 1981:847). Moreover, by 1983 the government seriously took the initiative to make Pancasila the sole basis (*asas tunggal*). The project was later made constitutional with the issuance of Law No. 3/1985, coercing all segments of Indonesia to adopt Pancasila as their only basis. Two of the greatest mass organizations even, NU and Muhammadiyah, had no choice but to adjust themselves to the state instruction.[118] Those that refused were banned; nothing could escape the regime's end (Hefner 2000:17). The Pancasila democracy in the hands of the New Order government served as much as jargon rather than real implementation. With it, the government imposed a family-based doctrine where opposition was deemed unnecessary since all decisions were to be made through consensus. With the Pancasila democracy, the government meant to secure political unity and stability, as well as to avoid political pluralism and accountability (Antlöv 2000:205–06).

The collapse of the New Order regime in 1998 by mass demonstrations led the country into serious political and economic crises. The Pancasila idealization was deprived, and Pancasila was removed from being *asas tunggal* with the People's Consultative Assembly's decision No. XVIII/1998. In this early transitional period, political Islam, which was suppressed under Suharto's regime, appeared publicly and Islamic parties mushroomed. The supporters of political Islam became actively involved in public debates over the definition of the public good of the state and society. Due to its use and misuse by Suharto's government, Pancasila had to face sustained challenges from the Islamists, who revived the old agenda, the introduction of the *sharīʿa* into the Constitution and the reinsertion of the "seven words" (with the obligation to implement the *sharīʿa* upon its adherents) into Pancasila. At the

[118] NU accepted Pancasila as its basis through the 1983 national congress of the *ʿulamāʾ* (*Musyawarah Nasional Alim Ulama*) and then confirmed once more in the 1984 national congress (*Muktamar*), both in Situbondo. Meanwhile, Muhammadiyah accepted it after the official enactment of Law no. 3/1985 through the 1985 National Congress in Surakarta.

parliamentary level, two Islamic parties, namely PPP and PBB (*Partai Bulan Bintang*, the Star-Moon Party), officially submitted the proposal for the inclusion of the *sharīʿa* into the Constitution during the annual meeting of the People's Consultative Assembly in 2002. Thousands of masses were mobilized outside the parliament building in support of the agenda. Nevertheless, their efforts failed, and the Constitution remains free from any 'religious' formula.[119]

It should be noted that there were forty-eight contestant parties in the 1999 general election. Of these, only eleven parties embraced Islam as their sole basis, whereas the others adopted Pancasila as their political basis, including two parties with close links to the two greatest Indonesian mass Islamic organizations, PKB (*Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa*, the National Awakening Party) with NU and PAN (*Partai Amanat National*, the National Mandate Party) with Muhammadiyah. The Pancasila-based, or secular, parties won a more than 76 percent of the vote. In the 2004 election, the Islamic parties won only a total of 17.98 percent of the vote. In the 2009 election, the vote for the Islamic parties even decreased to 15.01 percent, and to 14.78 in the 2014 election.[120] The quantitative data suggests that political Islam still fails to attract a considerable number of voters in Indonesia, even though Muslim citizens form the majority.

The only party that openly advocates for the establishment of an Islamic caliphate and the imposition of the *sharīʿa* is the Liberating Party of Indonesia (*Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia,* HTI) which is part of a global Islamist movement founded in 1953 in Jerusalem. Yet, HTI does not take part in the election because it deems the democracy run in the country as a corrupt system, as will be discussed later.

Having failed at the structural level, many of the supporters of political Islam – frequently called the Islamists – turned their attention to a cultural struggle, Islamizing society from below through religious gatherings and infiltration of local organizations, bureaucracies (Hilmy 2010:1–2), as well as through educational institutions. It seems that "Islamization" from below is more promising, especially if

[119] For further discussion on the struggle of political Islam in the post-New Order period, see, for example, Noorhaidi Hasan's (2005) *Laskar Jihad*, Masdar Hilmy's (2010) *Islamism and Democracy in Indonesia* and Nadirsyah Hosen's (2005) "Religion and the Indonesian Constitution*"*.

[120] For further reading about the results of the Indonesian elections, see: http://kpu.go.id/dmdocuments/modul_1d.pdf accessed on May 8, 2014; http://www.kpu.go.id/index.php/persentasepartai accessed on June 8, 2014.

we regard that religious sentiments and ideals, rather than national symbols, are widely employed in legislative, presidential, and local government elections, even by contestants from secular parties. Nevertheless, it is only a short-term project to acquire as many votes as possible.

In recent decades, there is a growing perception that connects religiously motivated violence with an extreme implementation of Islamist ideas, an absolutist understanding of religion that shows less tolerance regarding different interpretations on certain religious tenets. The most recent incidents were violence launched by Muslim hardliners toward an Ahmadi community in Cikeusik in 2011, a Shi'i community in Sampang in 2011 and 2012, and liberal-progressive activists in Yogyakarta in 2012. The state often fails to take necessary action, thus a call and wishful thinking from certain elements of society for the necessity of strengthening Pancasila within the national life emerges. A survey conducted by the PPIM (*Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat*, the Center for the Studies of Islam and Society) on May 15, 2007 suggests that only 22 percent of Indonesians support the *sharī'a* as the basis of the state, while the rest are in favor of Pancasila as the ideology of the state (Raillon 2011:110). Another survey conducted from 27-29 May 2011 by the BPS (*Badan Pusat Statistik*, the Central Statistics Body) finds that about 80 percent of Indonesians long for a return to the days when Pancasila was taught in schools. One of the reasons is back to the growing incidents of religious-based violence around the country.[121]

The overall exposition shows us that Pancasila is constantly debated and articulated by Indonesian people when they come to define what constitutes the common good for the relation between state and religion. Pancasila emerged as the common good because of its strong representation of national unity which had become the champion over all other goods and without exception, religion-based good. The dichotomy of religion-based majority and minority groups might not help us read how the national common good in Indonesia is constructed. Muslims have indeed been the majority since its independence, but a religion-based agenda in running the state does not constitute the predominant concern of the citizens. It would be more fruitful to address the issue at stake from the perspective of dominant political considerations. Bringing the territories formerly under Dutch political

[121] See www.thejakartaglobe.com/home/survey-finds-80-of-people-still-find-pancasila-relevant/444403 accessed on February 19, 2013.

control all together in Southeast Asia with its huge diversity in religions and ethnic groups becomes the ultimate good. In this regard, Pancasila appears as an efficacious mantra for the realization of this good. Political processes, indeed, have contributed significantly to the staging of Pancasila to become the country's common good. Successive regimes explicitly confirm Pancasila as the foundation of the state, despite different perspectives and understandings by the regimes in question concerning its interpretation and implementation. In the so-called Reformation Era, Pancasila remains central to the state and national social life, even though it, for quite some time, is openly challenged by some extremist groups.

## Islamizing the Common Good

By *Islamizing* here, I mean attempts of constructing arguments by referring to the Islamic precedents in order to justify that Pancasila does not contradict, but reflects the Islamic tenets. It has been frequently argued that Pancasila had actually been "Islamized" since its official announcement in August 1945. The objection raised by the secular nationalists was underlay by the existence of formulations directly connected with Islam. It is true that "seven words" were deleted, but the principle "Belief in God" was amplified to become "Belief in One and Only God" that strongly reflects Islamic monotheism.

Attempts of Islamizing the Pancasila seriously started during Suharto's New Order government that vigorously sought to create national stability through the indoctrination and the making of Pancasila the sole basis of the nation-state, which had come to face intense opposition especially from the Muslim side. Adam Malik (1917-1984), who was Vice President of the Republic (1978-1983), deemed that Pancasila has a similar spirit to the political document created by the Prophet Muhammad, widely known as the Constitution of Medina, in which all Medinan people, including the Jews, were considered one nation (*umma wāḥida*) together with Muslims with the same rights and duties (Madjid 1994:64). Moreover, it is surprising that NU, after being very critical to the policy of the government concerning Pancasila, accepted it as the sole basis through its 27$^{th}$ congress in 1984 in Situbondo, East Java. NU's acceptance was based on the conviction that Pancasila, as the basis and philosophy of the state, is not a religion and will never replace the position of religion. Moreover, the first principle closely reflects Islamic monotheism.

Accordingly, the acceptance of Pancasila could be seen as a realization of *sharī'a* implementation in the country (Ismail 1995:245; NU 1986:34–5; Wahid 2010:80). K.H. Ahmad Siddiq (d. 1991), who was the chairperson of the Consultative Board of the NU from 1984-1991, called Pancasila a *kalima sawā'*[122] (a common word), that is able to unify all segments of Indonesian society (Ismail 1995:246).

The discourse of Islamizing the common good of Pancasila soon became an Intellectual discourse. Nurcholish Madjid (1939-2005), a prominent Indonesian Muslim thinker, has argued that Pancasila was only accepted after long and tedious deliberations and after some of its principles had been further Islamized. Madjid contends that Sukarno's initial principle of "Belief in God", which may include polytheism, was changed into a more Islamic formulation of monotheism, "Belief in One and Only God". Moreover, it is made the first principle, while Sukarno's arrangement put it in the fifth. The third principle, "the Unity of Indonesia", was originally "Nationalism". It was changed into a more neutral, but dynamic, formulation as a solution to the Muslim objection to the term "nationalism" which was deemed inconsistent with the idea of Islamic universalism and brotherhood. The forth principle "Democracy", which was considered too general and could mean many things, was Islamized by adding a Prophetic teaching about "wisdom through deliberation" (Madjid 1994:58). Madjid is convinced that Muhammad Hatta, Haji Agus Salim, Ki Bagus Hadikusumo and Abdul Wahid Hasyim are credited with this Islamization.

Nurcholish Madjid's argument is actually based on his conviction that Islam constitutes the most important basis for Indonesian nationalism.[123] Pancasila serves as a foundation for the integration of Islam and the Indonesian identity. In his views, Pancasila answers the problem of double commitments: one to Islam and the other one to Indonesia (Burhani 2013:36). Referring to Robert N. Bellah, Madjid contends that the Medina society established by the Prophet and continued by the successive

[122] *Kalima sawā'*, as expressed in Q. 3:64, is a Qur'anic term, which is used to call the People of the Book back to the common belief and understanding, not to worship but God, not to associate anything with Him, and not to take one another as lords instead of God.

[123] Nurcholish Madjid (2004:24, 36) is convinced that anti-imperialist resistance in the Indonesian archipelago was severely shown by local sultans and *'ulamā'*, religious scholars. In the early 20th century, Madjid highlights the decisive role of the *Sarekat Islam* (the Islamic Union) in nurturing what he calls "radical" nationalist movements that made the freedom of Indonesia their ultimate goal of struggle.

caliphs after him represents a model of modern nationalism. The society was modern because it was open for the participation of all of its members and because its leaders felt disposed for assessments based on capability, rather than ascriptive considerations such as friendships, regionalism, tribal relations, ancestral relations, and kinship (Madjid 2004, 2008). It thus distinguishes itself from the old model of nationalism that is mainly based on a narrow tribal-minded basis (*ʿaṣabiyya*), which is condemned by Islam (Madjid 2004:32; Burhani 2013:37). In the Indonesian context, Madjid views that the position of Pancasila is similar to that of the Medina Charter which was agreed upon by the Prophet and other communities of different religions in the city (Burhani 2013:38). Showing the Islamic roots of Pancasila, Madjid affirms that in connection with Islam, Pancasila functions to give a constitutional framework for the implementation of Islamic teachings in the Indonesian context, whereas in connection with other religious communities it serves to provide a common platform for religious life and a firm basis for the development of religious tolerance and pluralism within the boundary of the Indonesian nation-state (Madjid 1994:64). Considering Pancasila a modern ideology, Madjid views that Pancasila has well functioned to bridge the gap between the cosmopolitan concept of an Islamic community (*umma*) and the concept of nationhood (Burhani 2013:39).

Madjid's fellow, Abdurrahman Wahid, the former President of Indonesia, a prolific figure within the NU circle and a son of A. Wahid Hasyim, was also a firm proponent of Pancasila, who also contributes to providing a theological establishment for its legitimacy. He was the main actor working with K.H. Achmad Shiddiq in formulating the NU's response to the issue of Pancasila as the sole basis of the Indonesian state in the 1980s. Ahmad Najib Burhani views that Wahid's ideological stance for his acceptance of Pancasila can be traced back to his concept of *pribumisasi Islam* (indigenizing Islam), "the manifestation of Islam in a local context" (Burhani 2013:28). The idea goes back to the belief that Islam, which brings a universal mission, has a cosmopolitan character, whose manifestations might be varied from generation to generation, and from region to region. In the modern Indonesian context, an important element of *pribumisasi* is the acceptance of Pancasila, which constitutes the identity and the basis of the Indonesia nation-state. Therefore, Najib views that Wahid's acceptance of Pancasila is consistent with his view on Islamic cosmopolitanism and the necessity of indigenizing the cosmopolitan nature of Islam

in a local context. Based on this view, Pancasila is not only in line with Islamic values, but also constitutes the best manifestation of Islamic universal teachings in the Indonesian context (Burhani 2013:31).

Moreover, Wahid viewed that Pancasila constitutes the best alternative for resolving the long-debated and arduous issue of relation between state and religion. He contends that formalization of Islam by the state would lead to unpleasantness not only for non-Muslims and *abangan* (non-committed) Muslims, but also for those *santri* (Muslims practicing a more orthodox version of Islam) who disagreed with the official religious line taken by the state. To involve the state in arbitrating religious matters, according to him, would inevitably result in the state trampling on the freedom of religious conscience of many of the citizens (Barton 2002:137). In Wahid's views, Islam can better function as ethical and moral guidance without necessarily being formally attached to the state and Pancasila can carry out its function as the most viable option to unite all the different elements of Indonesian society, guarantee the sustainability of democratization, and become an umbrella for the plurality of religious interpretations that may exist in the country.

Islamization of Pancasila contributes to enhancing its legitimacy particularly in front of Muslim citizens. It also can be understood as another process of confirming Pancasila as the national common good. It not only resolves theological polemics regarding a possible confrontation between Islam and nationalism, but also confirms that the integration of both is not impossible. In other words, this Islamization provides a theological ground for Pancasila as the best manifestation of Islamic values within the modern context of the Indonesian nation-state.

## Nation-state in the light of the Qur'an

The role of Muslim theologians in modern times perhaps can best be described as the providers of religious articulation regarding contemporary questions in Muslim society. A notion that the Qur'an speaks to all generations means that it must always "say something" with regard to developments in Muslim society, including the Muslim adoption of the modern nation-state. In referring to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (the Indonesian main dictionary), Shihab exhibits a definition of "nation" (*bangsa*) as "a group of people that share ancestral origin, custom, language and

history, and has its own government". Nationalism (*kebangsaan*), therefore, is characteristics that are linked to that nation (Shihab 2014b:435).

The nation-state as a modern invention in political systems was not known during the period of Qur'anic revelation. Indigenizing the Qur'an requires Shihab to devise whether there is a precept from the Qur'an – and the *Sunna* – that may help locate this concept within religion. In doing so, he identifies at least three Qur'anic vocabularies that in modern usage are frequently employed to indicate nation, namely *shaʿb* (a branched tribe from the same neighborhood), *qaum* (a community of people) and *umma* (a group of people that share the same commonalities; Iṣfihānī 1997:28, 245, 541). Shihab observes that in the Qur'an, the prophets before Muhammad used to call their peoples with *qaum* (*yā qaumī*, O my people). This differs from the Prophet Muhammad who used to call his contemporaries "O mankind!" (*yā ayyuhā 'l-nās*) and his followers with "O those who believed" (*yā ayyuhā 'l-ladhīna āmanū*). Shihab argues that man should not merely refer to those vocabularies when discussing such a modern concept as nation-state because their usage in the Qur'an could have generated different semantic meanings (Shihab 2014b:438) which may not indicate any connection with their usage in the modern era.

So, what kind of word does the Qur'an actually use to designate nation or nationalism? Does one have to refer to particular words of the Qur'an in order to expound the Qur'anic insight of the modern concept of nation-state and nationalism? It is true that the Qur'an does not specifically discuss such a concept, thus Shihab avoids exploiting certain Qur'anic vocabulary as a means to accept or to reject the concept. Rather, he examines whether the Qur'an acknowledges or provides space for the adoption of new ideas unknown during the revelation period. His stance can be explained from his conviction that the doctrine of "Islam is applicable in all times and places" must be understood from its remarkable capability of adaptation with human development and progress (Shihab 2014b:504). In this regard, though not explicitly, he introduces a notion of differentiation between religious and worldly affairs whose basis can be derived from the Qur'an and the *Sunna*. In fact, such a notion of differentiation has wide resonance among utilitarianist Muslims (Hallaq 1997:214–31), as discussed in Chapter 1.

Quraish Shihab's explicit source for this differentiation is the Prophet's sayings, "*You are more knowledgeable in matters related to your own life*", and "*Whatever belongs to your religious affair, to me is [the reference]; and whatever belongs to your worldly affair, you are more knowledgeable*" (Shihab 2014b:504, 621–22). Moreover, though not explicitly, Shihab notices that the Qur'anic use of the word *amr* (lit. affair, matter) suggests that from the very beginning, religion acknowledges differentiated spheres. Regarding *shūrā* (consultation or deliberation, Q. 3:159; 42:38),[124] for instance, the word *amr* is attributed to the Prophet and the Muslim community alike. This means that religion recognizes the existence of a sphere where human action becomes a decisive factor. On the other hand, the same word, *amr*, in some other Qur'anic verses, such as the questions of spirit (Q. 17:85), repentance (Q. 3:128) and belief (Q. 6:58), is attributed only to God.[125] This suggests that those matters belong only to the authority of God, the monopolized domain of revelation (Shihab 2012b:II,314–15). Furthermore, Shihab views that Q. 4:59,[126] which contains a command for Muslims to obey Allah, the Messenger and *ulū al-amr* (those in authority on Muslims' affairs), has the same resonance. He observes the word *ulū* in plural, which suggests that there are many persons in charge and the world *al-amr* in a definite form, which suggests a particular affair that is the social and worldly affairs. Matters of creed and foundations of religion are excluded here. Once again, according to him, this leads to an understanding about religious acknowledgment to the authority of people in determining certain issues (Shihab 2012b:II,585–86).

Such a notion of differentiation gives people wider discretion to determine what constitutes the common good in their lives in a particular context of history. With regard to the question of nation-state, Shihab examines some aspects that he believes to have constructed the idea of nationalism. From this standpoint, he

[124] Q. 3:159, *So by mercy from Allah, you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely [upon Him]. Q. 42:38, And those who have responded to their lord and established prayer and whose affair is [determined by] consultation among themselves, and from what We have provided them, they spend.*

[125] Q. 17: 85, *And they ask you, [O Muhammad], about the soul. Say, "The soul is of the affair of my Lord. And mankind has not been given of knowledge except a little."* Q. 3:128, *Not for you at all is the matter whether He should [cut them down] or forgive them or punish them, for indeed, they are wrongdoers.* Q. 6:57, *Say, "If I had that for which you are impatient, the matter would have been decided between me and you, but Allah is most knowing of the wrongdoers."*

[126] Q. 4:59, *O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result.*

elaborates on the Qur'anic text that partly or wholly reflects some important elements of nationalism.

*Unity*. Shihab contends that the Qur'an indeed emphasizes that all Muslims are "one community" (*umma wāḥida*), but it should be made clear whether the phrase means a Qur'anic requirement to unite Muslims into one single political entity or whether it is justifiable to create unity based on similarity in terms of ancestry, tradition, language, and history? Addressing this question, Shihab enquires what the word *umma* (community) actually means in the Qur'an. He finds out that the word *umma* is used for several meanings in the Qur'an. Quoting al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 502/1108), Shihab mentions that *umma* can mean a group of people tied by something that could be religion, time, or place, either through coercion or compliance. Besides, it could also apply to a group of animals or to an individual with dignity (Shihab 2014b:441).

To examine the idea of unity, Shihab observes the word *umma*, which is followed by the adjective *wāḥida*. He finds out that the phrase *umma wāḥida* is mentioned nine times (such as in Q. 21:92; 23:52)[127] to indicate the oneness of the Muslim community. Yet, nowhere in the Qur'an, he argues, is a phrase with a notion of uniting the Muslim community (*waḥdat al-umma* or *tauḥīd al-umma*) to be found. Accordingly, Shihab deems the phrases *umma wāḥida* and *tauḥīd al-umma* as two different concepts. The former gives emphasis to the condition of being one community with one religion, while the latter gives a deeper impression about a religious requirement to unite all Muslims in one form, or uniformity.[128] Referring to Q. 5:48, "*Had Allah willed, he would make you one nation [united in religion]*" (*wa lau shāʾa Allāhu lajaʿalakum ummatan wāḥida*), Shihab argues that diversity is, in fact, part of God's will. Employing a grammatical analysis, he highlights that "*lau*" is *ḥarf al-istimnāʿ*, a conjunction that functions as a conditional clause with a meaning of impossibility (Shihab 2014b:442–43). Based on Shihab's view, plurality from the Qur'anic perspective is deemed as divine intention or a fact of life, and the notion of

[127] Q. 21:92, *Indeed this is your umma [religion], one umma [religion], and I am your Lord, so worship Me*. Q. 23:52, *And indeed this is your umma [religion], one umma [religion], and I am your Lord, so fear Me*.

[128] An Iranian revolutionary and sociologist, Ali Shari'ati (1933-1977), develops the concept of God's unity into a unity of Muslim societal and political struggle. He argues that the Prophet's intention is not just to establish a monotheistic religion, but a unitary society (*nezam-i tawhid*) that will be bound together by public virtue, equality and human brotherhood (Abrahamian 1982:26).

uniting *umma* in a single political entity is never clearly prescribed in the Qur'an. It is likely that he aims to underline that Muslims might differ one from another in particular matters, including in political thought and affiliation. But still, they deserve to be called one *umma* because they share the same religion.

Moreover, Shihab renounces that pan-Islamism is to be understood as putting all Muslim countries under one political authority. Pan-Islamism as introduced by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838-1897), he argues, was intended to seek unity among Muslims by mutual cooperation to achieve common objectives and to respect the authority of each.[129] Indeed, the Qur'an prohibits Muslims from becoming divided, but this prohibition is applied when their division leads them into disputes and conflicts. To his conviction, this is what Q. 3:105[130] actually means (Shihab 2014b:443). He highlights that Islam is only concerned with a peaceful condition of Muslims as one community; it does not require Muslims all over the world to be necessarily united in one political entity. Accordingly, nationalism cannot be seen as betrayal against religion.

*Ancestry.* Shihab deals with the topic by delving into the Qur'anic perspective on the question of ancestral relations. He argues that indeed one of the purposes of religion is to realize the protection of progeny through the Islamic legislation of marriage. The Qur'an affirms, he continues, that God intentionally created humans in various tribes in order for them to know the potential of each, and thereby, each can interchangeably take the benefit from the potential of another. The Qur'an mentions that God Himself divided the Children of Israel in the period of Moses into twelve distinct nations (*umam*).[131] By this, Shihab is willing to underline that human division

[129] Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī is prominently associated with the idea of pan-Islamism. Actually he was very much concerned with anti-Western imperialism in the Muslim world, which later led him to lay down strategies in order to achieve this goal, including a call for the unification of all Islamic peoples and attempts of arousing nationalistic struggles. A brilliant analysis is given by Nikki R. Keddie concerning the extent this idea had tinted al-Afghānī's political career. Before the last years of his stay in Egypt (1871-1879), there was no documentation that linked him with the idea of Pan-Islamism. His appeals to a single Muslim nation can be explained as an adaptation to the Pan-Islamic climate that was widely adumbrated in the second half of the 19th century. During his stay in India in the early 1880s, he did not mention Pan-Islamic ideas in any of his published writings and speeches. This may explain that al-Afghānī was easy to swing back and forth between Pan-Islamic and local nationalist campaigns, depending on what strategy was more appropriate as an anti-imperialist weapon (Keddie 1972:139–42).

[130] Q. 3:105, "*And do not be like the ones who became divided and differed after the clear proofs had come to them. And those will have a great punishment.*"

[131] Q. 7:160, "*And We divided them into twelve descendant tribes [as distinct] nations. And We inspired to Moses when his people implored him for water, "Strike with your staff the stone," and there gushed forth from it twelve springs.*"

and affiliation to different families and kinships is a fact of life, and religion does not problematize such affiliations as long as it does not lead to fanaticism and disruption. Religion according to him is much more concerned if such an affiliation is able to maintain the common good (*kemaslahatan bersama*). In this regard, Shihab refers to the Medina Charter in which the Prophet clearly mentioned groups of people according to their families, kinships, and religions and called them one nation (*umma*), which would maintain a common interest, upholding justice, and affirming the same rights and duties. Furthermore, in order to emphasize the reasonability of such an affiliation, he also highlights that the Prophet indeed benefited and accepted the defense of his family, regardless of their different beliefs, when he faced severe resistance during his career in Mecca (Shihab 2014b:444–48). From the above elaboration, Shihab underlines that if nationhood must be based on ancestral origins and relations, it cannot be seen as necessarily having deviated from religion.

*Language.* In the modern political concept of nation, language is a fundamental and uniting aspect of nationalism, which constitutes the primary force in the creation of a nation.[132] For Shihab, the Qur'an has inspired a theological basis with regard to affiliation based on language. Referring to Q. 30:22, "*And of His signs are the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colors*", he views that religion explicitly confirms the diversity of languages as part of God's signs. In line with this idea, he contends, the Arabic Qur'an was revealed in "seven languages" (*sabʿat aḥruf*) by corresponding to the different dialects of its first addressees (Shihab 2014b:448–49). With regard to the question of nationalism, Shihab highlights the implication of having a common language. He refers to the Prophet's inclusion of some of his non-Arab companions – like Bilāl ibn Rabāḥ (d. 20/640), Salmān al-Fārisī (d. 32/652), and Ṣuhaib al-Rūmī (d. 39/659) – to the category of the Arab because they spoke Arabic. He quotes the Prophet who has said "the Arabian [attached] to one of you is not from your father or your mother; rather it is from the language. Whoever speaks Arabic, he is an Arab" (Shihab 2014b:447, 450).

[132] Benedict Anderson proposes a definition of nation as an "imagined political community". He criticizes Ernest Gellner (1925-1995) for the latter puts much emphasis on "invention" with regard to the emergence of nationalism and assimilates it to 'fabrication' and 'falsity' rather than to 'imagining' and 'creation'. According to Anderson (2006:6), communities in this context are to be distinguished by the style in which they are imagined, not by their falsity or genuineness. Language plays a significant role due to "its capacity for generating imagined communities, building, in effect, particular solidarities" (Anderson 2006:133).

The importance of language, according to Shihab, lies in its role in the construction of a common sense. Thus, a modern concept of nationalism, in Shihab's view, does not contradict religion, since it is an implication from human diversity of languages, which is itself a divine sign.

*Traditions and customs.* Outside of religious norms, humans live within a system of norms whose origins can be rooted from the traditions of the past.[133] As Shihab believes that nationalism may appear due to the similarity of tradition, he highlights the cosmopolitan character of Islam that can be applied in various contexts and localities. In his view, cosmopolitanism is expressed in the Qur'anic word *al-khair* (common virtue), while good regionalism is expressed in the word *al-maʿrūf* (goodness). He argues that traditions and customs, which vary from society to society and from generation to generation, are expressed in Qur'anic words such as *al-maʿrūf* and *al-ʿurf*, as long as they do not contradict *al-khair* (Shihab 2014b:452). Shihab does not elaborate further on what falls under the category of *al-khair,* but his articulation of religious texts gives a deep impression that *al-khair* is closely related to the legal discourse about the purposes of the *sharīʿa* and Islamic ethics.

*History.* It is true that nationalism may arise from the similarity of history. It even constitutes a fundamental element of nationalism for it can instill a common feeling and understanding among the members. The best way that Shihab can address the issue is by considering the role of Qur'anic narratives – stories and histories of people of the past – in serving religious missions. He sheds light on the function of Qur'anic narratives as a source of lessons and inspiration in order to determine the best way to face the future (Shihab 2014b:453). It seems that Shihab wants to link the function of Qur'anic narratives in the construction of common values in Islam with that of a history that binds people into some commonalities and a social imagination that eventually may lead to the emergence of nationalism.

*Patriotism.* Patriotism is commonly defined as cultural attachment or devotion to the homeland. Shihab argues that patriotism is, by all means, a part of human instinct and, thereby, cannot be understood as a contradiction to religion. He points

[133] In his analysis on European nationalism, Ernest Gellner viewed that nationalism seized on the realities of vernacular language, folk customs and the myth of national origin to build a new basis for the political order, which was founded on the sovereignty of people defined by common culture (Hefner 1997:19).

out that the Prophet himself once expressed his sadness when he had to leave Mecca for Medina. It also happened during his earlier period in Medina when the Prophet had to face Jerusalem instead of Mecca in his praying. Quoting from Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī's interpretation of Q. 2:144, Shihab highlights the Prophet's deep longing for his homeland, Mecca, and the *Kaʿba* shrine. He wished the *Kaʿba* to be the Muslim prayer direction (*qibla*), instead of Jerusalem, and God granted his wish accordingly; "*We have certainly seen the turning of your face toward the heaven, and We will surely turn you to a qibla with which you will be pleased. So turn your face toward al-Masjid al-Haram*" (Shihab 2014b:454–55).

We might say that Shihab's conclusion and analysis regarding the question of nationalism and nation-state derives mostly from his contention about the validity of God's natural and social laws in the universe. The mentioning of human division in nations, languages, ethnics and families in the Qur'an becomes Shihab's point of departure to observe the compatibility of a modern development in human history with religious teachings. He highlights the consequences of human division in several aspects – as acknowledged by the Qur'an – in the reality of human life. Because the plurality of culture, language, and nations is part of God's will, Muslim division in various nations cannot be simply seen as opposing religion. What religion concerns in social life, in his view, is the realization of the common good that could guarantee peaceful relations among the members of society. Thus, Shihab views that the modern concept of nationalism and its consequence, the emergence of nation-states, does not contradict the teachings of Islam, even though it emerges predominantly from worldly considerations on the grounds that from the Qur'anic perspective, those worldly considerations fall under the category of human nature, or constitute manifestation of 'divine signs' in the world.

## Delegated Sovereignty

Since its independence, Indonesia has overtly embraced democracy as its political system, though some regimes might exert an authoritarian or totalitarian policy and utilize democracy just as a symbol. The decision was not simply taken as such, if we regard the seedlings of democratic aspiration in the first half of the 20$^{th}$ century characterized by people's growing awareness to rule their own land and to decide their own destiny through the struggle for independence. Independence for

Indonesians was not intended to revive the old aristocratic system; rather, it was to realize equality for all citizens.

We will not discuss how democracy is misused by certain regimes in the country. Rather, we examine it in the light of a theological perspective that may challenge the adoption of democracy in a Muslim country. The collapse of Suharto's regime in 1998 paved the way for all elements of the society to "actively reconsider what constitutes the public good for the country" (Hilmy 2010:1) into the extent that the ideological foundation of the state, which contains a principle of democracy, became openly debated. The democratization that marks the beginning of a new era has enabled new Islamic movements to appear and old clandestine ones to show up openly. Islamist groups, whose commitment to democracy is doubted, harnessed the democratization process to deploy their aspirations on the necessity of Islamization which they believe to be the only viable solution to tackle the crisis in the country. With regard to responses to democracy, Masdar Hilmy (2010:7) classifies Islamist movements and groups in two major currents: first, the *utopian* or non-conformist groups that reject democracy outright, and second, the *meliorist* groups which attempt to accommodate democracy as a means of political struggle. Thus the former comes with a clear theological argument upon its rejection, while the latter do not explicitly show any rejection to the current system, but rather utilize it to enhance what they consider good from the religious perspective.

I will shed some light on the perspective of the utopian Islamists in order to comprehend their arguments in rejecting democracy before we come to discuss Shihab's elaboration on this matter. It is true that Shihab does not discuss the issue explicitly in response to a particular group, but rather he simply captures the issue that has yielded deep conflicting opinions in the Muslim world and considers it necessary to provide a theological explanation on it.

Based on Hilmy's categorization of contemporary Indonesian Islamists, the Liberation Party of Indonesia (*Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia,* HTI), which is closely linked to a global pan-Islamic movement under the banner of the Liberation Party (*Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr*),[134] falls under the category of the utopian Islamist. HTI was established in 1982

[134] The HTI is part of the global political organization of *Hizb al-Taḥrīr* which was founded in 1953 in Jerusalem by Taqī al-Dīn al-Nabhānī (1909-1977). In Indonesia, this political movement was introduced

as a clandestine movement during the New Order period. After the downfall of Suharto, it began to openly and vigorously campaign for the necessity of establishing a global Islamic caliphate that would rule the Muslim world through various means, ranging from printed books, pamphlets, public gatherings, and electronic media (Fealy 2007:157–58).[135] HTI is the only organization that which draws its ideology strictly from a Middle Eastern source – its parent organization – and arguably, it has less concern with indigenizing processes than most other foreign-derived Islamic movements (Fealy 2007:151–52).

ʿAbd al-Qadīm Zallūm (1924-2003), who is known as a prominent ideologue of the Liberation Party, states that democracy is not only a corrupt system but also an infidel system, which is incompatible with Islam in every way. Zallūm's statement is based on a common definition that democracy is a system of ruling where people are the absolute master and possess the sovereignty; it is the "ruling of the people, for the people, by the legislation of the people" (Zallūm 1990:2). According to him, democracy differs from the party's concept of the caliphate system since in the former, the sovereignty belongs to people, while in the latter, it clearly belongs to God through His legislation (Zallūm 2002:40–1). In Indonesia, HTI scathingly criticizes the implementation of democracy, considering it not only to have ignored the formal application of the *sharīʿa*, but also to have failed to bring people into prosperity.[136] Even worse, it perceives democracy in Indonesia as a "predator of virtue" (*pemangsa kebajikan*) in the sense that anyone who is involved in it would later become

by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Baghdādī, the leader of *Hizb al-Taḥrīr* Australia who moved to Bogor, West Java, with the invitation of K.H. Abdullah bin Nuh, the principal of the *Pesantren* al-Ghazali in Bogor, West Java. Under the New Order government, HTI worked clandestinely and avoided mentioning the name of *Hizb al-Taḥrīr* openly, although key elements of the organization's doctrine, such as the establishment of an Islamic caliphate and comprehensive implementation of the *sharīʿa*, were widely introduced, especially among educated Muslims and university students. This is why HTI chooses a more intellectual stance as its means of propaganda. HTI's activists notwithstanding also pay much attention to domestic social and political issues. They do so to show the failure of the current system in defending Muslims' rights and thereby to convince wider public about the necessity of creating an Islamic caliphate with the *sharīʿa* as the basis of political and social life. The downfall of Suharto in 1998 led to the emergence of HTI into public view (Fealy 2007:154–56; Hilmy 2010:118–21). For HTI's religious and political agendas in Indonesia, see also HTI's (2009) *Manifesto Hizbut Tahrir untuk Indonesia*.

[135] HTI's website is perhaps the most fascinating website among other Islamist websites. It provides the visitors not only with news and activity galleries, but also books ready for download, videos, radio and TV channel. For further exploration, see http://hizbut-tahrir.or.id/

[136] http://hizbut-tahrir.or.id/2007/11/13/hakikat-buruk-demokrasi/ accessed on May 13, 2013.

corrupt.[137] This may explain why HTI chooses not to get involved in the election or formal politics, though it declares itself as a political party.

In the Muslim discourse of political thought, both justifications for and rejections to a particular political system have been made with reference to the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition, although neither gives explicit instructions on this matter. Scholars of Islamic political thought, among them Nazih Ayubi (1991), argue that the foundational texts of Islam, the Qur'an and the *Sunna*, have very little to say on matters of government and state. The Qur'anic verses that contain terms linked to political concepts such as *khalīfa* (leader), *shūrā* (consultation), *umma* (community), *ulū al-amr* (those in charge in a particular affair), *sulṭān* (ruler), *mulk* (kingdom) and *ḥukm* (judgment, decision) have never reached the conclusion that God clearly commands the foundation of an Islamic state (Salim 2008:16). Given that the "state" is a Western concept representing a modern European phenomenon, pre-modern Islamic political thoughts mostly concentrate on the problems of government and the conduct of the ruler, but do not explicitly address the state as a generic category or the body-politic as a social reality and a legal abstraction (Ayubi 1991:6). One might derive explicitly from the foundational texts of Islam some general perspectives concerning the characteristics of a ruler and human relations in a community, but for a political system or a body of government it is unlikely.

In his discussion on the Qur'anic perspective on politics, Quraish Shihab contends that the Arabic equivalent of the English word "politics", *siyāsa*, is not found in the Qur'an. According to him, the Qur'anic insight on politics can be traced back from the word *ḥukm* and its derivatives, which literally means rule, decision or judgment. In his analysis, Shihab sheds light on a political argument popularized by the Khariji Muslims who opposed ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661) due to his acceptance of the idea of *taḥkīm* (arbitration) from the side of Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān (d. 60/680) after the latter's defeat in the Battle of Ṣiffīn (37/657). The Khariji disagreed with ʿAlī's move because they viewed that the rule should always be subject to God only, and therefore could not be subjugated to human arbitration. They cited the Qur'anic verse, *ini 'l-ḥukm illā lillāh* (no decision but belongs to God), to justify their political thought (Madelung 1997:246). In his response to the Khariji argument, ʿAlī said, "a

[137] http://hizbut-tahrir.or.id/2013/03/06/itulah-demokrasi-sistem-korup-pemangsa-kebaikan/ accessed on May 13, 2013.

word of truth intended for falsehood" (*kalimatu ḥaqq urīda bihā bāṭil;* ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd 2008:I,417).

Shihab contends that understanding Qur'anic verses that contain the word *ḥukm* – and its derivatives – requires careful reading of their given contexts, without which the understanding itself will be misleading. In doing so, he examines what the Qur'anic text *ini 'l-ḥukm illā lillāh* really means with regard to its context in the text. He identifies four cases in which such a kind of redaction is used. First, in Q. 6:57, he views that the word *ḥukm* designates "judgment" concerning worship and punishment matters, which belong only to God.[138] Second, the same redaction, Q. 12:40, indicates that judgment belongs only to God regarding the matter of worship and His oneness.[139] Third, Q. 12:67 emphasizes that only God can exactly determine the result of human efforts.[140] And forth Q. 6:62, with a slightly different redaction, indicates that all judgment belongs only to God concerning the final calculation of human deeds in the hereafter (Shihab 2014b:550–52).[141] Thus, it becomes evident that the above verses show no indication concerning political rule in the world, for they affirm God's sole authority in matters that belong to His monopoly as God who is worshipped by humans.

Given that God in the Qur'an is depicted as the Owner of the Kingdom of the universe, Shihab highlights a notion of "delegated sovereignty" in political rule. His point of departure is God's command to His prophets to give decisions regarding what their people disputed about (Q. 2:213)[142] and His command to all humans to give judgment with justice (Q. 4:58)[143] when disputes arise among them (Shihab 2014b:552–53). Furthermore, Shihab finds out that Q. 3:26 gives a clear indication on a notion of

[138] Q. 6:57: Say, *Indeed, I am on clear evidence from my Lord, and you have denied it. I do not have that for which you are impatient. The decision is only for Allah. He relates the truth, and He is the best of deciders.*

[139] Q. 12:40: *You worship nothing besides Him except [mere] names you have named them, you and your fathers, for which Allah has sent down no authority. Legislation is not but for Allah...*

[140] Q. 12:67: And he said, "*O my sons, do not enter from one gate but enter from different gates; and I cannot avail you against [the decree of] Allah at all. The decision is only for Allah; upon Him I have relied, and upon Him let those who would rely [indeed] rely.*

[141] Q. 6:62: *Then they are returned to Allah, their true Lord. Unquestionably, he has the judgment, and He is the swiftest of accountants.*

[142] *Q. 2:213: Humankind was [of] one religion; then Allah sent the prophets as bringers of good tidings and warners and sent down with them the Scripture in truth to judge between the people concerning that in which they differed...*

[143] *Q. 4:58: Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing.*

delegated sovereignty in which God is said to hold the authority to give or to deprive the sovereignty (*al-mulk*) to those He wills.[144] Shihab considers the notion of "giving and depriving sovereignty" as metaphorical because he views that the success or the failure of a ruling will depend predominantly on the degree of human capability to meet the preconditions and requirements of a successful ruling, or "divine" laws, in politics (Shihab 2014b:555) according to the religious vocabulary.

If so, who appoints a ruler according to the Qur'an? *Khalīfa* is a term that is widely known in the Islamic political discourse to designate a Muslim ruler. The term finds its resonance in the modern world with the growing aspiration of political Islam. In a response to a question of his era, Shihab examines the word *khalīfa* – which literally means vicegerent or successor – in the Qur'an to get into the idea as to what extent the word is linked to political authority. Statistically the word is mentioned twice in the singular form of *khalīfa* (Q. 2:30; 38:26),[145] four times in the plural form of *khalāʾif* (Q. 6:165; 10:14, 73 & 35:39)[146] and three times in a plural form of *khulafāʾ* (Q. 7:69, 74 & 27:62).[147] Shihab argues that only *khalīfa* and *khulafāʾ* suggest a notion of political authority, while *khalāʾif* merely designates a group of people without really any political power (Shihab 2013b:245).

To answer who really has the authority to appoint a ruler according to the Qur'an, Shihab highlights two cases of *khalīfa* appointment. The first is the appointment of Adam as mentioned in Q. 2:30, "*And when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I will make (innī jāʿil) upon the earth a khalīfa.*" Employing a grammatical analysis, Shihab pays serious attention to the use of singular expression

[144] Q. 3:26: "*Say, O Allah, the Owner of sovereignty, You give sovereignty to whom You will and You take sovereignty away from whom You will. You honor whom You will and You humble whom You will. In Your hand is all good. Indeed, You are over all things competent.*"

[145] Q. 2:30: *And when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successor."...; Q. 38:26: O David, indeed We have made you a successor upon the earth...*

[146] Q. 6:165: *And it is He who has made you successors upon the earth and has raised some of you above others in degrees [of rank] that He may try you through what He has given you...; Q. 10:14: Then We made you successors in the land after them so that We may observe how you will do; Q. 10:73: And they denied him, so We saved him and those with him in the ship and made them successors, and We drowned those who denied Our signs. Then see how was the end of those who were warned; Q. 35:39: It is He who has made you successors upon the earth. And whoever disbelieves - upon him will be [the consequence of] his disbelief...*

[147] Q. 7:69: *... And remember when He made you successors after the people of Noah and increased you in stature extensively. So remember the favors of Allah that you might succeed; Q. 7:74: And remember when He made you successors after the 'Ad and settled you in the land, [and] you take for yourselves palaces from its plains and carve from the mountains, homes...; Q. 27:62: Is He [not best] who responds to the desperate one when he calls upon Him and removes evil and makes you successors of the earth? Is there a deity with Allah ? Little do you remember.*

with a future meaning, *innī jāʿil*, which implies that God alone would appoint Adam as a vicegerent. According to Shihab, it is reasonable because at that time Adam was not created yet, which accordingly means that there was no single human at the time. The use of singular and future expression thus corresponds to that context (Shihab 2014b:557) when God spoke to the angels. It is different with the second case, the appointment of David, where plural past tense is used to indicate the appointer. It should be noted that according to Q. 2:251[148] David was given a kingdom, wisdom, and knowledge following his success of defeating Goliath. His appointment as a king is mentioned in Q. 38:26, "*O David, indeed We have made you (innā jaʿalnāka) a khalīfa upon the earth...*" Shihab observes the different redaction in David's appointment from Adam's where a plural personal pronoun is used in David's case. Given that the Qur'an is believed to be the word of God that affirms precision in its textual construction, this difference must indicate something, and cannot be simply seen as a merely textual difference. Therefore, Shihab concludes that the plural form is to be understood as the involvement of other parties along with God in David's appointment as a ruler (Shihab 2014b:558), or the involvement of people in his time in this regard.

As such, Shihab gives a rationalization for what constitutes, for some Muslims, a theological polemic regarding the appointment of a ruler in the Islamic perspective. With the notion of "delegated sovereignty", he fills the gap between the belief that God alone has the right to appoint a particular person to rule people with the fact that such an appointment always involves a certain mechanism that may prevail in a given society or nation. What is interesting, still, from his elaboration of human authority in politics is that he puts humans as subjects that have roles in decision making. God's involvement in human history, politics in this regard, is to be understood as the requirement with which humans have to fulfill in order to succeed in their attainment of political sovereignty.

## Seedlings of 'Islamic' Democracy

It is very much true that the first issue to confront the Muslim community following the death of the Prophet Muhammad was the issue of government, since

[148] Q. 2:251*: So they defeated them by permission of Allah , and David killed Goliath, and Allah gave him the kingship and prophethood and taught him from that which He willed...*

both the Qur'an and the *Sunna* say very little about it. Muslims had, therefore, to innovate and to improvise what was suitable concerning the form and nature of government (Ayubi 1991:1). In this regard, Shihab concedes that all issues related to the form of state, and the nature of government, belong to the consultation among Muslims. The absence of clear instruction from the Qur'an, as well as the *Sunna,* becomes a reason that gives Muslims much freedom to determine what constitutes the common good in their political lives. Thus, he comes to argue that caliphate – which was later followed by various Islamic kingdoms – is merely a system acknowledged in Islamic history, but he denies that the caliphate system is the only system to be adopted by Muslims in every generation (Shihab 2014b:444). It is to say that if Muslim society in a particular setting of history requires a distinct governmental system, it can be justifiable as long as it does not contradict Islamic values.

As for democracy, that has been a topic of extensive debates ever since the last century in the Muslim world, Shihab views that in substance, it is parallel to the concept of *shūrā* (consultation) with regard to public affairs. Thus, with full contention he expresses that democracy is not alien to, but inherent in Islam.[149] In his elaboration, Shihab examines democracy much more from the substantial perspective, rather than from the procedural one.[150] It means that he does not observe directly any practical implementation of it and does not give any assessment to the existing practices of democracy in Indonesia, as well as in other Muslim countries, either. Again, he functions himself as a theologian who attempts to give a religious articulation and perspective with regard to a political development in Muslim society.

For Shihab, there are two main integral elements of democracy: freedom and consultation. Both are explicitly mentioned in a number of Qur'anic verses. Freedom, in its various types, constitutes a fundamental basis and provides a conducive atmosphere for democracy. Shihab views that the Qur'an, in many of its verses, has

[149] Quraish Shihab said this statement in an interview with the daily newspaper Republika. http://www.republika.co.id/berita/dunia-islam/islam-nusantara/09/01/09/25212-prof-dr-hm-quraish-shihab-islam-mensyaratkan-demokrasi- , accessed on April 22, 2013.

[150] In a discussion on Indonesian Islamists' responses to democracy, Masdar Hilmy (2010:8–9) contends that it is not easy to have a clear definition of democracy, as it is an "essentially contested concept." He thus differentiates between the procedural or institutional definition and the substantial one. The former covers arrangements of political participation, competitive struggle for people's vote, and public accountability, while the latter covers more basic values such as liberty, equality, tolerance and respect to the law and justice.

clearly guaranteed for every individual the right of freedom, including freedom of belief, which according to him forms the most basic and important freedom of humanity. He affirms that the creation of humans with various beliefs is part of God's decision, as implied by Q. 16:93, "*... and if Allah had willed, He could have made you one umma...*" Underlining counterfactual conditionals of the verse, Shihab comes to emphasize that in reality, God does not will to create men in one religion, but to give them the freedom to choose the one that they believe to be the right path (Shihab 2014b:500). As such, Shihab perceives that freedom is a reason behind human existence and it is God's gift. Along with this argument, since freedom of belief, which constitutes the most fundamental freedom of humanity, is highly respected in Islam, other kinds of freedom must have been respected and valued, as well.

However, Shihab contends that freedom has its limitations when it comes to engage with plurality of beliefs and opinions; "Islam comes not only to defend its existence as a religion, but also to acknowledge the existence of other religions" (Shihab 2014b:498). In a plural context, freedom has to be situated with other kinds of freedom. Referring to Q. 34:24-25,[151] Shihab views that the Prophet was ordered to respect the freedom of his non-believer interlocutors in delivering their argument and remaining in their belief when a "battle" of argument between them eventually did not result in a common understanding (Shihab 2014b:501–02). In other words, Shihab emphasizes that freedom must be accompanied by tolerance and mutual respect.

As for the second element, though not something new in the modern Islamic political discourse, Shihab addresses the question of democracy in connection with the Qur'anic concept of *shūrā*.[152] Words with a root of *sha-wa-ra*, according to him, have a basic meaning "to extract honey from a beehive". The meaning then evolves to cover everything extracted from something else, including opinions (Shihab

[151] Q. 34:24-25: *Say, "Who provides for you from the heavens and the earth?" Say, " Allah. And indeed, we or you are either upon guidance or in clear error." Say, "You will not be asked about what we committed, and we will not be asked about what you do."*

[152] A number of scholars, among them Fazlur Rahman (1989:29), argue that *shūrā* is not genuinely an Islamic invention. It was a pre-Islamic Arab democratic institution of which the Qur'an confirms its great relevance. Various Islamic historical accounts mention that the Quraish Arabs used to consult one another in the *Dār al-Nadwa* (lit. the house of assembly). The house was founded by Quṣai ibn Kilāb (ca. 400-480), a prominent leader of Quraish at his time and the fifth paternal line ancestor to the Prophet Muhammad. Facing the *Kaʿba*, it was originally Quṣai's house that functioned as Quraish's public assembly to discuss their matters, including determining war strategy and holding wedding ceremony (ibn Hishām 1990:144; ibn Saʿd 2001:52).

2012b:II,312, 2014b:617). The basic meaning is developed into a doctrinal meaning that indicates *shūrā* as a condition of deliberation where each party or each representative is given equal opportunity to express their own opinion on a particular issue. The forum in the end will determine what is considered the best and most plausible solution for the good of the community. The best decision in this regard is likened to be honey that forms the most valuable product of bees.

What becomes of the domain of *shūrā* then? To determine this issue, Shihab applies a careful grammatical analysis to the word *amr* that is connected to *shūrā* in Q. 3:159, "*wa shāwirhum fi 'l-amr* (and consult them in the matter) and Q. 42:38, "*wa amruhum shūrā bainahum*" (and their affair is [determined by] consultation among themselves). Shihab sheds light on the definitive form of the word *amr* to designate the matter upon which Muslims are recommended to conduct *shūrā*. In both cases, *amr* is attributed to the Prophet and Muslims respectively. Taking the context of both verses into consideration, Shihab draws the conclusion that the domain of *shūrā* is social and public affairs (Shihab 2012b:II,315). Thus, *shūrā* does not deal with such doctrinal issues as belief, worship, and metaphysics, which are subject to the dictates of revelation.

Although *shūrā* is confirmed by religion, Shihab tends to consider it as an open concept that is adaptive and flexible to the development of Muslim society on the grounds that neither the Qur'an nor the *Sunna* provides clear instruction with regard to its form and institution. Although some examples regarding the practices of *shūrā* might be known from the Prophet and his companions, Shihab views that such practices are not religiously binding, even the most successful one. According to him, if only the Prophet had given detailed instruction on this matter, this would contradict the generality of the Qur'anic text, which leaves *shūrā* as an open doctrine. And if only the Prophet together with his companions had determined a *shūrā* body, this would apply only to their era, and thereby, it is not binding to the following generations (Shihab 2012b:II,317, 2014b:622). Thus, *shūrā* in Shihab's view is seen as a general principle –rather an institutional body – that could be applied by adapting to the conditions of a given generation. In his older article that is still relevant to his current position, Shihab says:

> The application of *shūrā* is subject to differences due to different times and places. It would be mistake, or even danger, to solve problems [faced by] a certain generation by [strictly] utilizing the templates of the first generation, or by [simply] implementing their experiments –even the most successful ones– in another time and place (Shihab 1994a:86).

Shihab concedes that there are differences in terms of substance and spirit between *shūrā* and secular democracy. The latter may cover any issue and result in any decision as long as it meets the consent of the citizens or their representatives. On the other hand, *shūrā* requires that the consultation not deal with matters that belong to the domain of revelation. Moreover, the decision made through consultation should not contradict general values which are highly enforced by religion in political and social affairs, such as social justice, responsibility, law enforcement, and human rights (Shihab 2014b:634). Perhaps these values are already known when democratization is widely aspired to in modern times. Yet, we may explain that Shihab attempts to elucidate the Qur'anic concept of *al-khair* (common virtues) in a more concrete embodiment when he comes to articulate religion with regard to a modern question of political system.

## Defending the National Common Good

Quraish Shihab's acceptance of Pancasila happens after having been convinced that there is no theological dissonance with regard to the question of the Indonesian nation-state which distinctly covers a huge diversity of religions, ethnicities, and cultures. He highlights the element of unity which constitutes the most important element in the establishment of a nation. According to him, a strong nation must have been espoused by the firm foundation of unity without which the idea of nation itself cannot be imagined, or the nation at stake cannot realize its consummate goals (Shihab 2011b:693). However, unity in Shihab's view does not necessarily mean to efface the diversity or differences that may have existed within the nation. Rather, unity is achieved through the people's agreement upon what constitutes a common good in their national life. In this respect, Shihab names the Medina Charter promulgated by the Prophet Muhammad as an excellent example as it not only had united the Arab Meccan immigrants (*al-muhājirūn*) with the Arab Medinan inhabitants (*al-anṣār*), but also had tied Muslims and the Medinan Jews as one nation and guaranteed, therein, religious freedom for each community (Shihab 2011b:697).

Thus, Shihab views that social and cultural diversity must be seen as a fact of life that should not be considered as an unsolved barrier of unity.

As far as the Indonesian nation-state is concerned, the formulation of principles that can maintain the unity and relations between individuals and communities within the state is of necessity. Shihab shows great confidence to the founding fathers who had formulated the philosophical foundation of the Republic. He contends that the "Islamic and Indonesian thoughts" had come together to create a formula that could represent the very nature of Indonesian people who were affiliated in various ethnicities and beliefs (Shihab 1994a:84). He views that Indonesia with Pancasila has brilliantly answered a thorny question in the modern age concerning the relation between state and religion. He believes that Pancasila has offered a "middle path"[153] for a pluralistic nation, neither a secular system proper, which maintains a sharp separation between state and religion, nor a pure theocratic one, which seeks to address every political and state issue from the perspective of religious corpus. Shihab apparently shows no theological dissonance regarding the adoption of Pancasila as the state ideology, as long as the state constitutionally recognizes and regulates the freedom of every citizen to implement his own religion without any interference from the state itself or other individuals (Shihab 1994a:85).

In fact, Pancasila allows Indonesia to remain as a 'secular' state in the sense that there is no single religion officially attached to the state as an identity. Meaning, the state remains neutral from any religious identification. The acceptance of most mainstream Muslims to Pancasila can be understood that its first principle greatly reflects Islamic monotheism, while the rest do not contradict the teachings of Islam, as elucidated by Madjid above. In this regard, Shihab simply views Pancasila as an attempt to seek a common platform for Indonesian nationalism, which in his view does not contradict the cosmopolitan nature of Islam.

Interestingly still, Quraish Shihab not only accepts Pancasila as the state foundation, but also shows his concern with regard to its declining position in the post-New Order period. He laments that Pancasila is rarely made a "primary

[153] B.J. Boland (1982:112) uses the term a "middle way" to describe Indonesia with Pancasila and the Ministry of Religion, while Azyumardi Azra (2006) names Indonesia's adoption of Pancasila with another identical term, a "middle path", that corresponds to the Islamic paradigm of *umma wasaṭ* (middle people).

reference" (*rujukan utama*) in public debates and discussions related to state, social and political affairs.[154] He believes that Pancasila contains a set of values, which can only function if they meet two conditions: first, they must be agreed upon (*disepakati*); and second they must be internalized (*dihayati*) and practiced by all elements of the Indonesian citizens (Shihab 2011b:729–30). The first condition does not pose a serious problem, since Pancasila has been widely accepted by the majority of citizens, although there are a few Islamic groups that are openly vocal in rejecting it particularly after the collapse of the New Order government. In his view, Pancasila in recent decades faces the second condition. It is not the problem concerning "the absence of values, but rather concerning our incompetence of internalizing the values in social life" (Shihab 2011b:731). To answer the second problem, Shihab sheds light on the importance of education and training as a chief project for a realization of national character building. He seems to hint at the method adopted by the New Order government, when Pancasila became an important part of national education. Reflecting on the challenge of globalization, Shihab affirms that Pancasila in the Indonesian context provides a set of general principles and values that could function as a filter for new values (Shihab 2011b:733–37) that may come from outside. In this case, Shihab puts emphasis on Pancasila as the identity of the Indonesian people. Indonesian Muslims therefore have two identities: first, a cosmopolitan identity as Muslims, and second, a national identity as members of the Indonesian state. Pancasila is believed to cover both.

To give an illustration on this matter, we may trace Shihab's viewpoint concerning the necessity of integrating religion with the new contemporary national context. He criticizes that a lot of religious materials taught in schools are not entirely

[154] Shortly after the collapse of the New Order government, mass media reverberated with Islamic grievances and frequent demonstrations that aspired for the incorporation of the Islamic *sharī'a* to the state ideology and constitution. For a moment, Pancasila was seriously being marginalized, if not rejected, in public discussions on state affairs, due its use and misuse by the New Order regime. Slowly but surely in the following years, Pancasila was brought back to the fore in response to the rising of religious-based violence across the country. See www.thejakartaglobe.com/home/survey-finds-80-of-people-still-find-pancasila-relevant/444403 accessed on February 19, 2013. In his speech in front of the members of the Parliament on August 16, 2007, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono introduced four pillars that denote a basic national consensus: Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, the Unitary Nation of the Republic of Indonesia (*Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia*, NKRI), and Unity in Diversity (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*). The four pillars were then massively socialized by Taufik Kiemas, the former president of the People's Consultative Assembly. The idea is recently getting more and more popular in Indonesian national life. Even the chairperson of Nahdlatul Ulama, Said Agiel Siradj, confirms that NU is always committed to uphold these four pillars. For the former President's complete speech, see http://presidenri.go.id/index.php/pidato/2007/08/16/723.html, accessed on May 28, 2014.

relevant with the current situation because they are roughly derived from interpretations of religious texts in the past that appeared within distinctly social and political contexts. He assumes that those old interpretations must have been influenced by the social and political situations at the time which can be illustrated by the superiority of the rulers of Islamic dynasties over Muslim society, as well as religious conflicts among Muslims (Shihab 2013b:289). Shihab views that religion has to be rearticulated in accordance with the development of Muslim society. Therefore, he disagrees, for example, with the inclusion of the topic of apostasy in schoolbooks – especially concerning the legitimacy of killing apostates – whose interpretation is entirely derived from old interpretations. Shihab considers it highly necessary that this subject be removed from schoolbooks, because not only does it constitute a matter of dissent among Muslim scholars, but also it could generate dangerous consequences for social and national stability (Shihab 2013b:290).

## Formal Implementation of *Sharīʿa*

The collapse of the authoritarian regime in 1998 was evidently celebrated with euphoria of democracy and political liberalization. One of its consequences is the emergence of political parties and Islamic groups considered by many as hardliners that all shared a common aspiration, a demand for formal implementation of *sharīʿa*. Although they failed in their attempts at the national level during the period of constitutional reform from 1999 to 2002, recent developments – following the institutional reform and the decentralization policy that delegates some areas of authority to local governments – indicate the growing demand of adopting *sharīʿa*-inspired by-law. Except in Aceh,[155] the adoption mostly covers the issue of public morality. However, the enactment of *sharīʿa* by-law is sometimes used as a means of power negotiation. This can happen because candidates or local governments have to

[155] The application of *sharīʿa* in Aceh, which was initially a manifestation of the central government's decision to give it the exclusive autonomy in religious life, has been responded to in various ways. Scholars like Arskal Salim (2003:224–25) view that the attempt by the central government did not touch the core problem in Aceh. Self-governance in religion was no longer the sole concern in Aceh. Rather, the concern had predominantly shifted to the problems of welfare and security, because of the New Order government's policy that exploited the province's natural resources with little redistributed to Aceh, and the enforcement of military rule that led to deep depression among citizens in the region. For further discussion on *sharīʿa* and politics in modern Indonesia, see: Arskal Salim's and Azyumardi Azra's (2003) *Sharia and politics in modern Indonesia.*

gain as much as power backing from local partners for the success and sustainability of their administration (Buehler 2008; Hasyim 2014:183).

As far as I observe, Quraish Shihab never comprehensively addresses the question of formal implementation of the Islamic *sharīʿa*, which has become one of the major issues regarding the relation between religion and state in contemporary Indonesia, in his works. He seems not interested in discussing the issue which is more politically charged than sincerely intended for social and community development. He views that attempts of formal legalization of *sharīʿa* in some regions in Indonesia, in general, do not touch the essence of religion. His opinion is based on his assessment of the formal implementation of *sharīʿa* in the country that merely focuses on external forms or religious symbols. He views that *sharīʿa* cannot be imposed nor be implemented, if the society is not ready for it. Thus Shihab is inclined to adopt a cultural approach, educating society about religious doctrines without necessarily imposing religious symbols. In other words, upholding religion does not necessarily mean putting it in a legal form.[156]

Shihab's theological stance concerning this matter can be explained, among other instances, from his reference to a disputed conceptual question regarding what he calls the "absolute domain" (*absolutisme*) and the "relative domain" (*relativisme*) in religion. Theoretically the absolute is defined as something which is believed to be the absolute truth, or to have one single interpretation, while the relative is when something contains various possibilities of interpretation (Shihab 2013b:341). However in reality, according to him, the absolute is not always fixed, but rather it has various levels and types, and is sometimes dynamic. Something might be considered absolute truth in one religion, but it is not the case in other religions. Even within the same religion, something can be seen as absolute according to one group, but it is not really as such according to other groups (Shihab 2013b:342). Therefore, he disagrees with attempts of imposing certain interpretations of religion, which might be adopted in formal legislation of *sharīʿa*, because other Muslims might believe in the validity of different interpretations – and not to mention some possible implications and consequences with regard to the adherents of other religions.

[156] Interview with Qurasih Shihab on July 24, 2012 in Ciputat.

The theoretical consideration for Shihab's stance is the Shāṭibian conception of *qaṭʿī* (evidential certainty) and *ẓannī* (evidential probability). The former occurs when a religious text generates a single and decisive meaning, while the latter is used to designate a religious text with evidential probability. Most of the Qur'anic verses, and the Prophetic reports, belong to the second category, *ẓannī.* Shihab views that the absolute domain in religion is determined based on firm arguments from the revealed texts that meet two conditions: having decisive authenticity and bearing one single interpretation. Therefore, although the authenticity of the Qur'an and the *mutāwatir* reports[157] is deemed precise and decisive, in Shihab's view, both do not immediately generate one single interpretation (Shihab 2013b:343), therefore he concludes that absolute domain in religion is far less in number than the relative. Accordingly, imposing Muslim society to adopt a certain way in the relative domain, which underlies most of the material in formal legislation of *sharīʿa*, would be problematic.

Moreover, Shihab contends that absolute truth in Islam is frequently identified with *ʿaqīda* (creed), while its practical manifestation is often called *sharīʿa. ʿAqīda* must have been definite, because it constitutes the main pillar of religion. Meanwhile, *sharīʿa,* in his view, is a rather dynamic entity because as a practical manifestation of *ʿaqīda* its implementation can be postponed (*mansa*) if it is seen necessary for the realization of a greater common good (*kemaslahatan yang lebih besar*; Shihab 2013:344) in the society. Referring to Q. 3:64, Shihab illustrates the Qur'anic message to the Prophet Muhammad to call the People of the Book together to the "common word" among them when differences upon the definition of "absolute truth" occur between them. He implicitly highlights that peaceful coexistence and mutual respect become the common good in a pluralistic society. Indeed, religious teaching is binding, but it applies only internally to its believers. When it comes to implementation within a pluralistic society, it has to be situated with regard to the common good of the society at stake.

As such, however, Quraish Shihab does not address the question of formal application of *sharīʿa* in a concrete manner. *Sharīʿa*-inspired by-laws, whose

[157] According to Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, a report is called *mutawātir* if it meets four conditions. First, it is transmitted by a huge number of transmitters whose agreement upon a lie is inconceivable. Second, this happens from the first generation of transmitters to the last generation in the chain of transmission. Third, the relation between transmitters can be verifiable. Forth, the report must contain certainty (ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2001:39).

implementation, in his view, does not touch the essential purposes of religion, indeed have been introduced in some regions in Indonesia following the decentralization policy in the post-Suharto era. Yet, Shihab does not clearly address the official legislation of what has been called *Kompilasi Hukum Islam* (KHI, Compilation of Islamic Law) which consists of three chapters: marriage, inheritance, and endowment, and was enacted in 1991.[158] It appears that his criticism on the idea of formal application of *sharīʿa* is restricted to that related to individual morality. He seems to view that formal regulation is needed when it deals with human interactions. Moreover, he might be of the opinion that family law must be put in direct reference to the dictates of religion because it deals with domestic stability of Muslim society.[159] But still, Shihab's opinion on this matter remains unclear. All in all, what is apparent from the absence of Shihab's clear support or rejection regarding the formal implementation of *sharīʿa* is that he views that religious, social, and intellectual projects can still be achievable under the existing Indonesian political system.

## Conclusion

The foundation of the Indonesian nation-state is tied with the promulgation of the Pancasila as the state philosophical foundation after a difficult compromise between two major contending political factions in modern Indonesia: the Islamic

[158] *Kompilasi Hukum Islam* was enacted through a Presidential Instruction in 1991. In general, the *Kompilasi* adopts the classical Muslim legal doctrines, especially those of the Shāfiʿī School. However, in some cases it also introduces a number of reform aspects by accommodating local customs, state interest and new tendencies in the contemporary Islamic discourse in Indonesia. Euis Nurlaelawati suggests that the *Kompilasi* needs to be understood within the political context in the late New Order period. She argues that the enactment of the *Kompilasi* by no means represented the intention of the state toward an actual Islamization in the country. It was only part of the negotiations undertaken by the government to deal with increasingly vocal demands in society. More precisely, it would be better observed in the framework of the changing political strategy of Suharto who sought Muslim political support for his presidential position in the midst of fragmented support within the military. Suharto's political interest in the *Kompilasi* is apparent from its enactment through a Presidential Instruction that has a lower legal status than a Statute or even Governmental Regulation, but enjoyed the full backing of the President (Nurlaelawati 2010:89–94).

[159] Regarding the question of marriage, Shihab's opinion is a rather strict one. He holds firmly a matter of religion as the most important consideration in marriage, practicing a prophetic tradition that urges Muslims to put religion as the top priority when they are going to arrange marriage. Although the textual reading of Q. 5:5 allows a male Muslim to marry a woman of the People of the Book, Shihab does not recommend interreligious marriage not only in order to secure the Muslim husband from changing his religion, but also to give guarantee that the children will become Muslims. He views that the permission in Q. 5:5 was granted in the social context where gender relation between men and women had put men in a very dominant position. He contends that such relation has changed in present days. Men may not be as dominant as before, even in some cases women can be dominant over men. Accordingly, mono religious marriage meets the purpose of religion that seeks to preserve Muslim faith. For further reading, see Quraish Shihab's (2012b) *Tafsir al-Misbah III*, Q. 5:5.

nationalists and the 'secular' nationalists. The supremacy of Pancasila to serve this function rested in its power to guarantee a sense of unity for a people with a huge diversity of cultures, religions, and ethnic groups. Though initially created as a political consent, Pancasila has confirmed itself, at least up until now, as the national common good through political, cultural, and intellectual processes. For the majority of Indonesian Muslims, it is believed to have bridged the gap between religion and nationalism, between Islam-ness and Indonesia-ness.

Living in an era of the nation-state, Quraish Shihab in his capacity as a Muslim theologian and exegete deems it necessary to provide a theological explanation rooted from the revealed texts of Islam upon some contemporary questions regarding the Muslim adoption of nation-state. Following the utilitarianist approach to religion, Shihab adopts a notion of differentiation between religious affairs, which are fully subject to the dictates of revelation, and worldly social affairs where religion provides only general principles, and leaves the detailed mechanism of social and political development in Muslim society to people's discretion. Therefore, he is convinced that whatever social and political systems are adopted by Muslim society, they cannot be seen as necessarily contradictory to religion as long as they corroborate the general principles imposed by religion in social matters such as social justice, responsibility, law enforcement, and human rights. Muslim division in several nation-states cannot be seen as simply treachery against the religious paradigm of *umma.* Shihab emphasizes that Muslims always deserve to be called one *umma* because of their religion, despite their affiliation to different social and political systems. For him, any human ruling in the world must be seen from the framework of "delegated sovereignty" to fill the gap between a theological doctrine of God's ruling and the visible fact of human ruling. In his view, the rising and falling of human rule in the world is subject to God's laws, which are manifest in a certain mechanism in social and political life.

## Chapter 4

# Staging Qur'an-based Religious Virtues

The development of mass higher education and the proliferation of mass media in the Muslim world in recent decades have brought broad implications for the emergence of new actors claiming for the task of staging virtue (Salvatore 1998:87–88) and for the dynamic re-actualization of religious discourse. In contemporary Indonesia, this situation is fostered with the growing democratization process in the post-New Order period which results in the emergence of "multiple centers of power and contenders for authority" (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996:132). The educated class of religious specialists, the *'ulamā'*, who are often perceived to have long dominated interpretation of religious texts, have to face a serious challenge from the new intellectuals of university graduates, independent preachers, and users of communication technology who recently have emerged as new contenders to speak for Islam. Increasingly accessible forms of communication media have provided multiple discourses of religion with new channels and spaces to take place within the possible reach of a wider public. In the capitalist world, the confluence of religion and mass media, especially television that targets as many audiences as possible for commercial ends, has displayed blurred boundaries between entertainment and religion. Religious programs delivered by popular preachers seem to be more desirable by mass audiences for their ability in appeasing the public with their peculiar gestures, strong marketing of morality, and somehow entertaining presentations of religion. Driven by commercial motives, most of the Indonesian television channels become more interested in feting "celebrity" preachers in their religious programs. Accordingly, religion has to adopt a new form of representation that should not be confrontational with the capitalist rules of mass media.

This chapter focuses on the appearance of Quraish Shihab on an Indonesian television channel to depict an attempt by a religious scholar to penetrate the domination of a genre of religious discourse on national televisions by popular preachers. The importance of Shihab in our discussion rests in his strong emphasis on promoting religious intellectualism which forms an alternative, or even a counter

discourse, to the dominant and popular discourse of religious piety in the new public sphere. Although only limited during Ramadan and Islamic holidays, Shihab's presence outside the 'official' habitat of religious learning also marks an important fact concerning the struggle of the *'ulamā'* to maintain their influence in the public sphere where many things might have been embraced by capitalist corporates as commodities. For Shihab in particular, his presence on television can be seen as part of his strategy to indigenize the Qur'anic teachings to wider audiences. This chapter aims to answer questions: how does an adapted intellectual discourse of religion operate outside its 'official' culture? What can it offer to the public? And what makes it survive within a commercialized sphere?

## Media Revolution and a New Sense of the Public Sphere

Discussions on the public sphere originate from Jürgen Habermas's conceptualization to understand the emergence of new spaces of public debate situated outside the official control of the state where people from various cultural backgrounds deliberate about their common affairs. The public sphere is "an institutionalized arena of discursive interaction ... a site for the production and circulation of discourses that can in principle be critical of the state" (Fraser 1997:70). In fact, many of the discussions on the public sphere are mainly developed as criticism to Habermas's concept which is deemed too normative to be universalized across time and geography (Meyer and Moors 2006:4; Salvatore and Le Vine 2005:5). In order to understand the public sphere in the Muslim world, scholars have argued that the idealized bourgeois public sphere explored by Habermas cannot be universalized as such on the grounds that his version is limited to modern secular settings that exclude "the actions for reclaiming the common good performed by various social (including socio-religious) movements that do not reflect or endorse the kind of secularity produced by the modern state" (Salvatore and Le Vine 2005:5). Some of his critics have argued that it will be more productive to imagine the public sphere "as a proliferation of publics, as a contested terrain that ought to be thought of in terms of its multiplicity or diversity" (Meyer and Moors 2006:12) where several groups and identities are competing for the definition and construction of the common good. In this regard, reading the public sphere in the Muslim world cannot be simply carried

out by the exclusion of religion and religion-based movements that play a significant role in the construction of the common good.

While Habermas's notion of the public sphere takes place physically in face-to-face meetings for public debate and discursive interaction such as in coffeehouses, markets, and public squares, our discussion here deals with a new sense of the public sphere created by new communication technologies that have shown their significance in the Muslim world since the second half of the 20th century.

The media revolution soon becomes a global phenomenon following the development of information technology in modern times. Hugely relying on the extent of mass readership, printed media have enabled the transportation of messages to reach a wider scope of audiences than just spoken words. While religious books are normally circulated among and consumed by scholars and students of religious knowledge (or *santri*s in the Indonesian term), in recent decades what are so-called "Islamic books" appear and have become widely circulated and consumed by urban Muslims in the Muslim world, without exception in Indonesia. 'Islamic' books cover topics related to "advice manuals, tales of religious heroes, fictionalized morality tales (including teenage 'Islamic' romances), and practical guides on how to raise children as Muslims in the contemporary world or how to live as a Muslim" (Eickelman and Anderson 1997:48). Most 'Islamic' books are, in fact, written by those who do not have considerable formal experience of religious training. In the Indonesian context, many have been translated from Arabic. What is interesting here is that 'Islamic' books have yielded a space for religious readership that may challenge or even set aside the readership of works written by religious scholars due to their increasing consumption by the populace.[160]

The development of communication technology, radio, television, telephone, and the Internet provide channels for more rapid transportation and more massive dissemination of information. Accordingly, migration of religious discourse between media (Eickelman and Anderson 1997:48) becomes a common phenomenon. Radio and

[160] From 2007 to 2008 I was a translator of some 'Islamic' books from Arabic into Indonesian. New publishing houses emerged and compete with each other not only to translate books of this kind from Arabic, but also to come to Cairo –or maintain cooperation with some Indonesian students there– especially during the Cairo International Book Fair, which is held annually in the last week of January. Publishing houses are aware with the potential market of the 'Islamic' books in the most populous Muslim country.

television, particularly, become the most popular media in Indonesia through which news and information are widely broadcast. Different from printed media, which effectively target people with a certain degree of reading culture, audio and visual media do not require such condition in order to channel Islamic religious discourse to the audience for they are available to literate, less literate and even illiterate audiences alike. In this regard, a new sense of public sphere emerges that leads to the migration of people and religious discourse, as well.

The development of media technology not only has made unprecedented changes in terms of people's ways of communication, but also has multiplied the ways in which religious authorities and discourses are produced and reproduced. With the proliferation of media that is supported by a democratic atmosphere in the post-Suharto era, the government cannot easily regulate the flow of information on media. Religious leaders, too, cannot lavishly control the content of religious discourses that may spread to and be consumed by the society. It is so because this new distinctly public sphere exists not only outside formal control of the state, but also outside the control of conventional religious establishments. This condition depicts the significant roles played by new contenders in the production of religious discourses that may limit or even challenge the authority of the state and conventional religious scholars, and accordingly contributes to the "fragmentation of political and religious authority" (Eickelman and Anderson 1999:1–3; Turner 2007:117–18).

The importance of new communication media lies in their ability of providing new spaces for interaction and further religious discussions. Muslims are no more strictly confined by conventional constraints of family, ethnic and formal institutional networks, but are classified according to their interests (Eickelman and Anderson 1999:1). They have more freedom to selectively choose what they consider reliable and plausible from an expanding intellectual and "spiritual marketplace" (Fealy 2008:16) or "markets of faith" (Abaza 2004) rather than simply adopting the already settled interpretation of religion from their parents and teachers. Within this new Muslim public sphere, people can participate in the production and actualization of religious discourse, or merely consume and choose from the multiplied religious discourses available in the free markets of faith. Accordingly, the democratization of religious discourse in the new public sphere becomes central to the fate of the contemporary definition and meaning of Islam.

Scholars have observed that the expansion of new communication technology can have corrosive consequences for the authority of conventional religious scholars who acquire religious authority mainly from text-based learning (Turner 2007:121). It does not necessarily mean, however, that text-based learning is put back to marginal importance in the construction of religious authority. Reproduction and preservation of the original language of revelation still gives the scholars a special status and prestige within their communities (Turner 2007:118). The corrosive consequence in this regard rests particularly in the potential migration of people and religious discourses to the new Muslim public sphere, the frequency of which may generate a common understanding about the existence of a new religious authority outside the expert domain of conventional religious scholars.

The new contenders of religious authority, who have a tenuous link with the learning culture of the *'ulamā'*, basically tend to orient themselves to a broad public rather than a few people with scholarly backgrounds. For many trained Muslim scholars, the languages and interests of these new actors may appear bizarre or even un-Islamic, but this fact is probably what makes the new public Islam more attractive to mass audiences (Hefner 2001:496). Nevertheless, the confluence of religion and mass communication media, in Indonesia as well as in many Muslim countries by certain actors, exhibits to us an important phenomenon where "Islam is shown to thrive and develop not in reaction against, but instead along with information technology" (Meyer and Moors 2006:5).

## Marketing Piety in the New Public Sphere

A Spanish sociologist of religion, Jose Casanova (1994:5), calls a phenomenon of the return of religion in the public sphere as "deprivatization of religion". It is a fact that "religious traditions throughout the world are refusing to accept the marginal and privatized role which theories of modernity, as well as theories of secularization, had reserved for them."[161] Following the global trend, religion in Indonesia began to

[161] Theories of secularization require that religion be formally consigned to the private sphere only. Many observers have argued that secularization was actually political reaction unique to the context of modern Western Europe rather than something inherent in any civil society (Casanova 1994; Eickelman and Anderson 1999:14). But the idea in a certain degree became widespread in the Muslim world through colonial powers. The aftermath of secularization in the Muslim world can be seen partly from an assumption that religion was irrelevant for a modern society for it was a cause of backwardness. Secularization, on the other hand, was then seen as the right path toward modernity and development.

penetrate public life in the last three decades. This can be rooted from a political shift within the Indonesian Muslim community in the early period of the New Order where political Islam was seriously suppressed and many Muslims, accordingly, had to turn to uphold the so-called 'cultural Islam', a depoliticized form of religion that was not only tolerated by the government, but also encouraged to penetrate into all corners of society (Hefner 2000:59). The increasing power of cultural Islam made Suharto direct his support to Islam in the 1990s, especially when segments of the military were challenging him. The Indonesian Association for Muslim Intellectuals (*Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia*, ICMI), which was founded in 1990, was a Suharto-sponsored association to mobilize Muslim support for this end (Hefner 2000:125; Liddle 1996:615).[162] In the post-Suharto period, both political Islam and cultural Islam found more expanded grounds for their public appearance including some coverage on mass media that has enjoyed much more freedom since the enactment of the Press Law in 1999 and the Broadcast Law in 2002. Islam has a much greater presence in social and political life that it had before, marked by the increasing numbers of Islamic congregations and the expanding use of Islamic symbols, dress, and language in public spaces.

The staging of religious consciousness is not simply overlooked by mass media, especially television. Islamic themes during most of the New Order period, indeed, did not enjoy much coverage on electronic media. The regime limited Islamic coverage on the state-owned radio and television to secure its political interest. *Mimbar Islam* (Tribune of Islam) was a weekly program discussing several topics of Islam that aired on the state-sponsored TVRI in the 1990s. There were a few occasional Islamic programs that also enjoyed coverage on TVRI, such as *Nuzulul Qur'an* (the day of Qur'an revelation), *Isra' Mi'raj* (the day of the Prophet's night journey to Jerusalem and his ascendance to heaven), and *Maulid Nabi* (the day of the Prophet's birth). The national competition of Qur'an recitation (*Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an*, MTQ) was also broadcast on TVRI. In the final stage of MTQ interestingly, President Suharto used to attend (S.K. 2011:25). MTQ was a particular moment where the Qur'an was present on the national television apart from its recitation in the opening ceremony of Islamic

[162] There are some other instances of Suharto's policy that can be seen as his attempt of making reconciliation with Islam such as the establishment of the Islamic bank, the expansion of the authority of Muslim courts, the end of the prohibition on the wearing of the headscarf in schools, the founding of an Islamic newspaper, abolition of the state lottery, the expansion of Muslim programs on television, and increased funding for Muslim schools (Hefner 2001:506–07).

days. Following the deregulation process within the Indonesian television context (Chan and Ma 1996:48; D'Haenens, Gazali, and Verelst 1999:135), Islamic programs began to broadcast weekly on some private television stations such as: *Penyegaran Rohani Agama Islam* (Invigorating Islamic Spirituality) on RCTI, *Gema Rohani Islam* (Resonance of Islamic Spirituality) on SCTV, and *Penyejuk Imani Islam* (Soothing Islamic Faith) on Indosiar.

It should be noted that in Indonesia, television emerges as an important provider of public space for new contenders in the task of speaking for religion. By new contenders, I mean that most of those who frequently appear on television to deliver religious topics are new actors who intellectually have a tenuous link with the *ʿulamā*-tic culture of learning. Compared to that of other media, the importance of television in the Indonesian context lies in its potential covering of wide segments of Indonesian citizens. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) indicate that by the late 1980s, more Indonesians were regularly watching television rather than reading newspapers or listening to the radio, although radio remained important in rural areas (Sen and Hill 2006:114). Television has changed rapidly from the late 1980s when the New Order government gave license to five private commercial television stations to start broadcasting.[163] The emergence of private commercial stations not only provided new channels of publicity, but also marked the end of the monopoly, of almost thirty years, of the state-owned television, TVRI. In its recent finding, the BPS shows that more than 80 % of Indonesian people access television for various purposes, surpassing access to radio and printed media.[164] Surveys conducted by AudienceScapes and CDAC Network confirm the high degree of television accessibility in the country and its role as the dominant source of news, information, and

[163] It started with the launch of *Rajawali Citra Televisi Indonesia* (RCTI) in 1989, *Surya Citra Televisi* (SCTV) in 1990, *Televisi Pendidikan Indonesia* (TPI) in 1991, *Andalas Televisi* (Anteve) in 1993 and Indosiar in 1995. For further discussion on the early development and the roles of Indonesian televisions, see: Krishna Sen's and David T. Hill's (2006) *Media, Culture and Politics in Indonesia*, and Leen d'Haenens's, Effendi Gazali's and Chantal Verelst's (1999) *Indonesian Television News-Making Before and After Suharto*.

[164] See: http://www.bps.go.id/tab_sub/view.php?kat=1&tabel=1&daftar=1&id_subyek=27&notab=36, accessed on June 20, 2014.

entertainment for Indonesian citizens. In 2009, more than 90 percent of the households have at least one television set.[165]

Electronic media have shifted Islamic discourse "beyond the classical language of texts into contemporary vernaculars, and [this] involves new actors, sites of production and consumption" (Anderson 2013:889). One of the most striking features in the post-Suharto period concerning the public presence of religion is the appearance of popular or celebrity-like preachers on television to deliver religious themes. Although perceived as lacking in religious learning experience, they are quite successful in maintaining public popularity through an adept use of media technologies, nice-looking style, attractive presentation, and appealing rhetoric. They seem to know how to deliver religious topics before the screen to attract as many viewers as possible. Although each of the preachers may become a favorite for a certain segment of audiences, all of them share a common trait, "marketing" religious piety and ethical comportment, which effectively target mass audiences. Educated in electronic technology, Abdullah Gymnastiar (Aa Gym) had been favored by Muslim women before he took a second wife in late 2006.[166] Another preacher enjoying a highly respectable profile is Arifin Ilham who regularly drives the audience with his emotion-charged rhetoric. Jefri al-Buchori (1973-2013), a former drug addict, was popular among youth and women for his powerful rhetoric and attractive appearance. He was a genuine artist, appearing regularly in television soap operas in teacher roles and singing his songs. Another popular preacher is Yusuf Mansur, formerly bankrupt, who vigorously promotes religion-based philanthropy. His primary audiences are middle-aged executives (Fealy 2008:25–6; S.K. 2011:26).[167] This might explain why religious programs hosted by popular preachers usually have a

[165] For further information about media market in Indonesia, see *Media Market* (2010) published on http://www.audiencescapes.org and *Indonesia, Media and Telecoms Landscape Guide* (2012) on http://www.cdacnetwork.org/

[166] Aa Gym rose to fame for his successful capturing of the hearts of Indonesians by marketing his message of "Managing the Heart" (*Manajemen Qalbu*, MQ). He ran a successful business around this brand, ranging from food and drinking products, radio, and television. Different from traditional religious scholars, Aa Gym builds his legitimacy by cultivating a particular relation with his audiences that depicts a shift from traditional hierarchical forms of religious authority toward a more relational. For further reading, see for example James B. Hoesterey's (2008) "Marketing Morality: The Rise, Fall and Rebranding of Aa Gym".

[167] Some popular preachers get more famous because they are chewed over just like celebrities. Their family affairs, scandals and controversies are publicly broadcast and feted by the media in the so-called "infotainment" program.

higher rating than those hosted by professional religious scholars who tend to adopt a rather 'official' language of religion when delivering their lecture.

The transposition of religious topics on television has a consequence in terms of the necessity of adaptation not only to the rules of a new public sphere, but also to the mission of mass media itself, in which the target is as much for profit.[168] Marketing religious piety, to a huge extent, fits the agendas of television managers who target as many as spectators as possible in order to maintain commercial benefits. Preachers who are able to choreograph their performance well on television will be usually trusted by television managers for further holding of the delivery of religious programs, while those who lack the ability to maintain their popularity will be easily replaced by newer and more attractive preachers (S.K. 2011:45). Thus the transposition of religious discourse changes "the associative ecology of Islamic discourse, juxtaposing religious issues in innovative ways with commerce, entertainment and the professions" (Eickelman and Anderson 1999:14). Accordingly, it is not unusual that preachers have to break their sermons to allow some advertisements to broadcast. They even, on some occasions, need to link certain products with their sermon (S.K. 2011:27).

In a process of culture or discourse production, the audiences play a passive, but very decisive role as they become "the target and medium of commercialism" (Ahmed 2008:80). Religiosity has been a field that undergoes dramatic change at a time when a society experiences socio-economic and cultural transformations. Moral certainties and particular types of religiosity closely linked to the lives of earlier generations are eroded by modern urban culture. People begin to pursue new sources of moral guidance in the spiritual marketplace as a response to what has been referred to the "destabilization of religious identity" (Fealy 2008:28). Televisions in this regard 'capitalize' on this kind of public phenomenon with the broadcasting of religious programs by celebrity-like preachers based on an assumption that most of

[168] The emergence of private media television in Indonesia was initially an impact of the transnational media commercialization and the deregulation process within the country's television context (Chan and Ma 1996:48; D'Haenens et al. 1999:135). Commercialization makes the privatized media become dependent on market responses for its revenue. Impressive economic growth reinforces the proliferation of commercial television, since it creates huge demands for more channels for advertisements. The Indonesian television revolution in the 1990s can be seen as the government's response to the competitive pressure of transnational television by improving the competitiveness of domestic television in order to attract wider viewers with multiple choices (Chan and Ma 1996:48-9).

the beneficiaries of their religious programs are those mass audiences who are intellectually 'lazy'. For mass audiences, the 'transcendental' religious teachings, which are abstract and sometimes ahistorical for them, are hard to discern. To be able to have imagination and sensation about religion they need, somehow, a mediating processes and visualization. In this regard, popular preachers act as mediators for giving a sort of sensation and visualization of abstract religious teachings. This can happen because "the transcendental is not a self-revealing entity, but, on the contrary, always 'affected' or 'formed' by mediation processes in that media and practices of mediation invoke the transcendental via particular sensational forms" (Meyer 2006:14). Television, in this regard, corresponds well to the interest of mass audiences, who are in need of spiritual 'splash' to sense the 'transcendental', particularly after being busied with their daily routines.

The consolidation of media power and people's common interests constitute the maker of existence and the activator of public sphere (Salvatore 1998:88). Television broadcasters may have their own agenda with regard to the programs they broadcast, but they, too, at the same time cannot ignore the importance of mass gravitation. That is to say that they cannot offhandedly overlook "the rationales of the market culture" (Salvatore 1998:89) that demonstrate the interests and attitudes of most parts of the society. To deal with this situation, television programming observes the conditions of what becomes part of popular culture and accordingly put its own agenda to work within the culture industry (Ahmed 2008:80). Within the capitalist structure, all television programming shares the same ideology, willing to earn as much profit as possible. Illustrating this phenomenon, Theodor Adorno (2001:99) contends that "the entire practice of the culture industry transfers the profit motive naked onto cultural forms". In other words, television programming aggressively makes every element of culture "just another commodity that subscribes to the principles of the capitalist market" (Ahmed 2008:80). In this regard, all the content of mass media is situated within the framework of advertisements and commercialization. This is what happens in Indonesia where television broadcasting maintains to become a magnet for mass audiences. In fact, the public sphere televisions have created is secular in nature. Yet, marketing religious piety, which

emerges as a form of popular Islam,[169] becomes a necessity after considering some potentialities of its marketability to the public.

The confluence of popular culture, religion, and media not only brings about new media personalities, but also new styles of orthodoxy. Islamic piety and ethics appear as vital elements of identity for a growing number of Muslims. Religious piety now becomes a common moral idiom in mass-mediated and commercial culture through popular preachers who have the ability to "personify the capacity of commercial media to respond to and resonate with the aesthetic and moral sensibilities of consumers at various levels of sensual and cognitive experience" (Schulz 2006:222). The frequent staging of religion by popular preachers on televisions may instill a deep impression among mass audiences that those preachers are, indeed, authorities in religion. It is an authority which is constructed through certain forms of media engagements and durable promotion of particular religious practices and experiences. The condition is probably inherent to the nature of the public sphere in general, which continuously interacts with popular cultures in a manner that allows non-elites in religious knowledge to "challenge and shape hegemonic public discourses" (Salvatore and Le Vine 2005:7) in the new Muslim public sphere.

## Branding Religious Intellectualism

Mass media have provided an expanded space for religious discussions outside the official culture (Turner 2007:127) of the mosque and other conventional religious institutions. As mentioned before, the capitalist character of mass media determines who will deliver religious topics and how religious themes will be publicly deployed. By considering common sensibilities and interests of the wider society, marketing piety by popular preachers appears to be the dominant establishment of religious discourse on Indonesian televisions. In this regard, the appearance of a well-reputed and professional religious scholar like Quraish Shihab in a new public sphere for a relatively long period of time is worth analyzing.

[169] Popular Islam is a form of expressing Islam as belonging to large numbers of Muslim citizens. It is also defined as a form of Islam associated with the populace or the masses against the official orthodox forms of Islam mostly associated with a small group of elites (Gaffney 1992:39). But what fits our discussion here is a kind of popular Islam, which is "mass-produced, mass-mediated, more urban than rural, more globalized and cosmopolitan, for the most part, than rural, traditional versions of popular Islam" (Weintraub 2011:3).

Shihab began his public appearances on television in the late 1990s when he was hosting a program *Sahur bersama Quraish Shihab* (Pre-dawn meal with Quraish Shihab) on RCTI, during which he discussed several topics related to the fasting of Ramadan. In the early 2000s he was a host for a program called *Lentera Hati* (Lantern of the Heart) on Metro TV in which he discussed a number of important topics such as leadership, women, predestination, and art in the light of Qur'an interpretation. Beginning in 2004, the program was replaced with *Tafsir al-Misbah* where Shihab discussed Qur'an interpretation based on the textual order of the Qur'anic codex. In addition, he also delivers short sermons (*Kultum*) which are aired on some other national televisions during Ramadan.

Qur'anic exegesis is central to all the TV programs hosted by Shihab. He feels inspired by and shows much respect to Muḥammad Mutawallī al-Shaʿrāwī (1911-1998), an Egyptian popular preacher, for his ability of collecting two important tasks: hosting a Qur'an lecture on an Egyptian television that attracted a massive audience – an achievement that is probably unparalleled by any contemporary Azhari scholar – and documenting those lectures in a printed book.[170] Shihab intends to visualize his Qur'an-based teachings so that the guidance of the Muslim Sacred Book can reach a wider scope of the public. Unlike al-Shaʿrāwī who built his image on a portrait of a peasant with popular rhetoric, strong physical gestures, and a scene of classical religious circle (Gonzales-Quijano 2000:246–48), Shihab builds his image on television by giving strong impressions about being an Indonesian urban Muslim. The way he dresses reflects the image of an Indonesian – particularly urban – Muslim, wearing the typically Indonesian long sleeve shirt – sometimes in the batik style –, trousers, and an Indonesian black cap (*songkok*). With sober gesture and rhetoric, he attempts to deliver his lectures on the Qur'an in a way that soothes the soul of the audiences and

[170] Al-Shaʿrāwī started his recorded work in the 1980s, while its transcription began to appear in the 1990s. It is likely that he did not write his commentary by himself. He was assisted by other persons who transcribed and edited his recorded Qur'anic lectures into a book, which is known later as *Tafsīr al-Shaʿrāwī*. To maintain authorship, al-*Shaʿrāwī*'s handwriting regarding his endeavor of presenting his contemplation on the meaning of the Qur'an is mentioned in its printed version. In fact, al-Shaʿrāwī does not call his exegetical work as *tafsīr*, but rather contemplations (*khawāṭir*) on the meaning of the Qur'an. By the term contemplations, he puts emphasis on "given knowledge" (*hibāt*) acquired from purifying the soul and practicing worship. He views that if the Qur'an has to be interpreted, it is the Prophet Muhammad who is the most eligible person to do this interpretation because the Qur'an was revealed to him (Shaʿrāwī 1991:I,9). Quraish Shihab is impressed with al-Shaʿrāwī's notion of contemplative understanding of the Qur'an in the sense that interpreting the Qur'an has to converge two elements: knowledge pertinent to interpretation and divine guidance sought through spiritual examination. Interview with Quraish Shihab on July 24, 2012 in Ciputat.

avoids direct judgment when dealing with differences. He is also different from most popular preachers who sometimes perform by wearing Arabian *gallabiya*, turbans, and chic-*songkok*, and frequently show vivacious rhetoric and strong physical gestures.

What is interesting is that Shihab is probably far from being a person who merely follows the capitalist rationales of the market in order to maintain his public presence on television. As a reputed scholar, he appears not easily subjugated to follow the dominant trend of religious discourse on television. He is aware that his task is not only as a preacher, but also as a teacher who has to deliver a civilizing program to the audience.[171] The continuing broadcast of his Qur'an-based program on a national private TV channel suggests a certain degree of success, most likely with urban educated audiences who mainly became the loyal audience of Metro TV.[172] Shihab seizes the opportunity in an era of information technology where new spaces for dialogues and discussions are created to deliver religious knowledge in an expanded public sphere. He feels it necessary to maintain considerable existence in the new public sphere by participating in the construction and orientation of religious discourse[173] and by promoting religious civility and literacy that might be neglected by other religious actors who become much more concerned with promoting religious piety. This situation can be understood as a concern by a religious scholar about the fact that "as much as commodification is one of the prime strategies for religions to assert their presence in neoliberal religious marketplace, outreach in spaces always implies the risk of loss of control over believers' interpretations" (Meyer and Moors 2006:10). Shihab's appearance on television explains a condition where a scholar is refusing to be bound merely to a conventional religious sphere when a large number of Muslims begin to actively maintain considerable existence in the new public sphere.

[171] It may not be surprising that Quraish Shihab can maintain his public presence with his Qur'an lecture on Metro TV because this TV station is adamant with the quality of its programs and is not so concerned with racing for rating and share (Wijaya 2008). Yet, we also need to credit Shihab's appearance on other televisions like RCTI and SCTV, hosting short sermons on particular topics.

[172] As a news-based television channel, Metro TV is strongly correlated with the affluent, educated and thoughtful audience (AB+). Internal research conducted by Metro TV suggests a growing number of its audience. Previously the audience came from the age range of 20 to 60, and now they come from the range age range of 15 to 60. Interview with Yanti, co-producer of *Tafsir al-Misbah* on Metro TV, on February 18, 2014 in Jakarta.

[173] Interview with Quraish Shihab on July 24, 2012 in Ciputat.

As a scholar with a great fame and reputation in religion, Shihab comes up with a different discourse of religion. If popular preachers are identical with their marketing of religious piety, Shihab brands his image with "religious intellectualism". By religious intellectualism I mean an endeavor of understanding religion based on an accountable argumentation of religious texts. It is an attempt to decipher the messages and the significances of the revealed texts for contemporary socio-historical situations. It therefore differs from the discourse of religious piety, for the latter lacks in intellectual grounds. In the Indonesian television context, religious intellectualism is an alternative discourse that sets itself in contrast to – or to oppose – what is defined as mainstream, religious piety in this regard. It is consumption of religion with rather "cool-headed reasoning" in opposition to the other with "sub-cognitive feeling" (Fealy 2008:31).

It should be noted that Shihab deliberately manages to be different from most popular preachers not only in content deployed, but also in styles of representation.[174] He prioritizes success in deploying Qur'anic messages and transfer of knowledge rather than merely performing rhetoric that drives the emotional sensitivities of the audiences. For his audiences in general, Shihab's lectures are placating, for he does not steer toward polemics when different interpretations of religion occur.[175] Of course, the most distinct feature of his performance on television is the presence of the book. In many of his stages, especially during the *Tafsir al-Misbah* program, he looks comfortable holding a volume of his exegetical work. The book might function as a guideline for him to deliver lessons in a more coherent and directed way. More importantly still, as will be discussed later, it gives a strong impression about how transmission of religious knowledge must be carried out. It should be borne in mind that although new mass media provide an important channel for the spread of religious messages, the printed word retains a special place in authoritative communications (Eickelman 1999:35).

As such, the presence of Quraish Shihab on television programs has tinted the way Islamic messages are delivered in the new public sphere. The "official" culture of Islamic learning and the scholarly discourse of religion are now displayed on the

[174] Interview with Yanti on February 18, 2014 in Jakarta.

[175] I conducted small-scale research on social media during Ramadan 2013 and 2014 (1434 and 1435 H), and find that those who are interested in Shihab's lectures are to a high degree impressed with his ways of elucidating religious topics that can bring tranquility.

screen and have become accessible to a wider public. The show depicts the presence of a well-reputed master and the book that constitutes the most fundamental elements in the validity of knowledge transmission in the traditional sense of learning. That is what is missing from most religious discourses on television by popular preachers, although common Muslims may consider listening to their sermon as seeking religious knowledge as well.[176] The notion of religious "knowledge", for them, mostly covers information, stories, prayer readings, and a know-how religious lifestyle. It is different from the definition of knowledge by professional religious scholars whose task is predominantly to interpret and to articulate religion in a particular context of history.

Throughout history, the development of Islamic religious discourse has always involved specific men and specific texts. Religious texts are read, interpreted and discussed with the presence of a master. The books become the guidelines from which interpretations are developed and realities are responded.

In the prophetic period, the book is symbolized with the Qur'an, while the master is the Prophet himself. In the early post-prophetic period, the *Sunna* became included into the category of the book, while there were multiple masters, the Prophet's companions (*ṣaḥāba*) and the successors of the companions (*tābiʿūn*).[177] With the emergence of schools for theology and law, the culture of Islamic learning has been divided into different schools. Consequently, the notion of authoritative sources of knowledge becomes a point of disagreement among various schools. Certain texts are deemed authoritative in one school, but it is not the case in other schools. The case is likewise concerning the authority of masters. Responses to their authority are always varied. Even the reliability of certain Prophetic traditions

[176] I observe the use of a Javanese-Indonesian word "*ngaji*" (lit. to learn), which is commonly used to indicate activities of learning religion. For *santri*s (students of religious knowledge) of course, the word is used to indicate activities of learning Islamic religious subjects from a reputed scholar. But, the word is also used by lay Muslims to indicate activities of listening to religious sermon from a preacher or a scholar acting as a preacher. *Majlis taklim* (lit. learning congregation) is a place where lay Muslims come for what they call *ngaji* (pursuing religious knowledge). It is not the place for *santri*s to do proper *ngaji*. I bring this issue to see activities of watching a TV preacher for lay Muslims as the same activity of "learning" in *Majlis Taklim*.

[177] It has been reported that the Prophet had left two things, as long as Muslims hold them firmly, they would never go astray: the Qur'an and the *Sunna*. Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Albānī (1988:566), an Albanian specialist of *ḥadīth* (Prophetic tradition) criticism considers it as a sound report (29371). Meanwhile, it also has been reported that the Prophet said that his companions are like stars; whomever Muslims follow, they would be well guided. Although, many scholars consider the report as false (Albānī 1992:144–45), the content is true, for many companions acted as teachers from whom later generations learned religion.

transmitted through Shi'i chains, for example, is questioned and rejected within the Sunni circle. Above all those differences, notwithstanding, the Qur'an still constitutes the primary book of Islam and the point of agreement.

The appearance of *Tafsir al-Misbah* on television, therefore, could mean many things. First, it marks the growing significance of Qur'anic exegesis in the Indonesian public sphere. It complements the well-established and popular tradition of the recitation and the "festivalization" of the Qur'an in the country (Rasmussen 2010). Understanding the meanings of the Qur'an is a further step from just recitation and memorization.[178] The process involves a certain degree of intellectuality and literacy. In this regard, Shihab introduces the Qur'an to the public as an intellectual pursuit rather than just a ritual one. Second, by demonstrating the Qur'an in the new Muslim public sphere, it revives Muslim interest in Qur'anic exegesis, which remains in occupancy of peripheral importance in the traditional milieu of Islamic learning in Indonesia (Bruinessen 1990). A new trend of understanding religion by referring directly to the Qur'an – and the prophetic tradition – without necessarily being mediated by scholastic interpretations is now being introduced to the public in order to offer new horizons and understandings. And third, the staging of Quraish Shihab with his *Tafsir al-Misbah* on television can be understood as an effort by a religious scholar to enhance his authority in the sphere where interpretation over religious symbols are openly contested by various actors. It takes part in visualizing an "authoritative" culture of religious learning where both the master and the book are present.

## The Making of Religious Intellectualism

By *making* I mean those factors that contribute to the staging of a religious program hosted by Quraish Shihab within a commercialized virtual public sphere. It is not surprising if such a program as *Tafsir al-Misbah* is favored by a small number of audiences because religious intellectualism currently does not form predominant consumption by mass audiences in Indonesia, and probably in any other country in the Muslim world as well. It is more closely identified with the contentment of middle

[178] Quraish Shihab views it necessary to train the youth in methods of Qur'an interpretation. He contends that memorization of the Qur'an without understanding its meanings is just like a cassette, and it is not really a distinctive effort. A conversation with Muchlis M. Hanafi on July 23, 2012 in Ciputat.

class, educated Muslims. In the midst of an era where commercialization determines the viability of mass media and profit becomes the ultimate goal, staging religious intellectualism seems to find little space on television for it cannot attract as many viewers and is less promising in bringing high ratings as required by most television managers. Commercialization, together with public interest, seems to be a serious challenge for scholarly religious programs to broadcast. Quraish Shihab alone cannot achieve this purpose without the cooperation of a television station that shows an interest in such a genre of religious programs such as Metro TV.[179] In this regard, the collaboration between him and Metro TV constitutes a maker of existence for religious intellectualism to stage in the new public sphere.

Metro TV is an Indonesian news-based private national television station which was launched on November 25, 2000 and is owned by Media Group of Surya Paloh.[180] Metro TV is among Indonesia's few national television stations concerned with news programs and offers no opera soaps. Apart from news, Metro TV also broadcasts talk shows, documentaries, and urban entertainment. In terms of content, Metro TV is concerned with broadcasting issues related to democracy, technology, health, education, art, and culture.[181] *Tafsir al-Misbah* is one of Metro TV's special programs during Ramadan. It is very likely that Metro TV and Quraish Shihab meet in the ideal of public education through religious programming. Shihab endeavors to "indigenize" the Qur'anic messages in a pluralistic society, while Metro TV shows its commitment to empowering education and strengthening civil society, as shown in its current slogan "knowledge to elevate".[182]

It should be noted, however, that Metro TV is like other Indonesian television stations which have no particular concern with religious issues. It 'capitalizes' on and corresponds to the high degree of consumption of Islam during Ramadan which is,

[179] Of course, we cannot ignore that Shihab's relations with some leading figures of Metro TV play some role that-allows this collaboration to happen. A conversation with Muchlis M. Hanafi on February 15, 2014 and interview with Yanti on February 18, 2014 in Jakarta.

[180] Surya Paloh (b. 1953) is an Indonesian media tycoon and politician. He is currently the President of the new political party of National Democrat (NASDEM). Because the party supported a pair of president and vice-president candidates during the presidential election of 2014, Metro TV was involved in somehow polemical broadcasts that were intended to win the campaign (personal observation during the campaign).

[181] Information about Metro TV can be seen from this link http://www.metrotvnews.com/aboutus accessed on November 24, 2014.

[182] Interview with Yanti on February 18, 2014 in Jakarta.

itself, a commodity that has significant economic and cultural effects.[183] The "orchestration of time" (Armbrust 2006:208) on televisions during Ramadan occurs due to the confluence of business and religion. In this respect religion, which is initially a home for ritual observances, is commodified in a way that meets the purpose of the television station. The broadcast of *Tafsir al-Misbah* must also be seen as a response to the festivalization of religion that is taking place in both private and public spaces during this Islamic holy month. Metro TV embraces a kind of religious programming in line with its "ideology" as an attempt to respond to the current religious enthusiasm within Indonesian society.

The adoption to new media technologies, such as television, by a religious scholar is an opportunity to spread religion to the outside world, but there are rules that have to be taken into account when the spread of religion has to be done through television. This is not simply a matter of television allowing for the expanded public visibility and audibility of religion. Equally important, it implies particular formats and styles often taken for granted, by which religion may maintain its public presence (Meyer and Moors 2006:11). In the case of *Tafsir al-Misbah*, the broadcast involves a co-host who accompanies Shihab during the show. He or she plays a central role in organizing the flow of the show. The co-host opens the show by greeting the guests and the audience, followed by a preliminary introduction about the general topic being discussed. He or she breaks the show for commercial interludes, raises questions, and gives the audience the opportunity to raise questions. The co-host is usually chosen because of his or her public fame. He or she could be an artist or a popular television presenter.[184] Above all, the co-host is responsible in maintaining the communicative atmosphere for this "cool-headed" program. The guest audience is chosen according to strategies of marketing. They can be state officials, businessmen, artists, models, and other professionals. Moreover, those who are on the stage, including Shihab, are made up and wear clothes from the sponsor – for Shihab and the host most frequently. This is a common phenomenon in the television world

[183] According to a report in August 2011 by an American global information and measurement company, Nielsen, during Ramadan potential Indonesian TV audiences grew up to 8 percent. Soap operas and comedies are situated with the spirit of public piety.

[184] To mention some names, Inneke Koesherawati (an artist), Lula Kamal (a doctor and a presenter), Hilbram Dunar (a TV presenter), David Chalik (an actor and a TV presenter) and Alya Rohali (an actress and a presenter).

and can be understood as a strategy to maintain a sort of product marketing and gravitation before the audience.

However, it does not mean that Shihab does not have some degree of autonomy. As a religious scholar with a high degree of prestige, Shihab requires, for instance, that the co-host should be someone having good image in terms of public reputation. He or she should not be among those who are publicly reported for having scandals and other disreputable attitudes. Besides, Shihab requires that there shall not be intervention concerning the material he is going to deliver. The material has to be aired in its entirety without any intervention that may lead to misunderstanding of Qur'anic messages.[185]

## Projecting the Good of Moderate Islam

First of all, we need to mention major tendencies of approaching religion that openly came to the fore and competed with each other for public consent after the downfall of Suharto in 1998, a time which was marked with the lifting of restrictions on the freedom of the media and on the freedom to assemble and to organize. First, there emerged *sharī'a*-minded groups of Muslims who sought to implement *sharī'a* in its full and literal form as set out in the Qur'an and the *Sunna* without any compromise. In many cases, they were very reactive to what is deemed as corrosively secular and liberal thoughts of religion. Their tendency toward the use of offensive language and physical violence not only worried non-Muslim citizens, but also upset the majority of Indonesian Muslims (Anwar 2009; Fealy 2004). For analytical purposes, I will call them scripturalist Muslims for their tendency toward the literal understanding of the text and the absolutist nature of belief.

Second, there also emerged young educated Muslims who sought to counterbalance the scripturalist discourses of religion and began to actively promote a style of "Islamic liberalism", especially with the establishment of the Islamic Liberal Network (*Jaringan Islam Liberal*, JIL) in 2001. Liberalism here connotes "the adoption or pursuit of values that are oriented toward greater individual liberty" (Abou El Fadl 2005:17) and the greater application of contextual and critical readings of the revealed texts and religious tradition. Thus what becomes the main concern for Indonesian

[185] Interview with Yanti on February 18, 2014 in Jakarta.

liberal thinkers is a pursuit of "new ways in which Islam could be interpreted and implemented with greater relevance to conditions in contemporary Indonesia" (Feener 2007:132). The tendency toward liberalism is often rejected by wider segments of Indonesian Muslim society for it is seen to have disregarded the normative basis of religion, as well as some aspects of the traditional Islamic religious scholarship, and thereby, often arouses controversy.[186]

In the Indonesian religious context, the scripturalists and the liberals are just like two contrasting poles and often engage each other in tense and polemical debates.[187] Like in most other Muslim societies, both poles constitute the minority of the whole of Indonesian Muslims. For the purpose of analysis, a term needs to be introduced to describe a middle position that represents the religious tendency of mainstream Indonesian Muslims. Thus, I use the term "moderate Islam". The term definitely needs a careful definition because there are no clear boundaries between it and the previous two categories. Some segments of moderate Islam might also be sympathetic to the scripturalist interpretation of religion in some issues, while some others might be more inclined to the liberal interpretation in some other issues, as well. What we can say about the general characteristics of moderate Islam is that its proponents, to a high degree, believe in the normative doctrines of religion, but at the same time they avoid using offensive judgments over interpretations of religion with which they disagree and thereby, show a greater state of tolerance.

Indonesian televisions are, in particular, targeting Indonesian audiences who come from various cultural and religious backgrounds. Since 1975, Indonesia has been ruled according to the SARA policy that dictates a portrayal of unity in diversity. Four

[186] Among the key issues that are deemed controversial are religious pluralism, inter-religious marriage, and women's emancipation.

[187] It should be borne in mind that this is not a new phenomenon unique to the post-New Order era. Both Islamic scripturalism and liberalism have their own genealogy in the history of modern Indonesia. Islamic scripturalism can be traced back to Islamic reformist movements that showed much interest in a scripturalist approach to the religious tradition and redeployment of a symbolic vocabulary of Islamic ideology and institutions. Meanwhile, Islamic liberalism can be rooted from such Indonesian Muslim thinkers as Ahmad Wahib, Djohan Efendi and Dawam Raharjo who were involved in limited group discussions under the direction of A. Mukti Ali, former Minister of Religious in Yogyakarta, and Nurcholish Madjid who became widely known for his controversial call for "secularization" (*sekularisasi*). By this term, Madjid meant a critical understanding of Islamic tradition by "desacralizing" humanly outmoded interpretations of religion that had been mistakenly understood as divinely sanctioned ones. Yet, his critics –Islamist groups– often equated his call for secularization with the ideology of "Secularism". For further reading, see R. Michael Feener's (2007) *Islamic Legal Thought in Modern Indonesia*, and Syafi'i Anwar's (2009) "Political Islam in Post-Suharto Indonesia: The Contest between "Radical-Conservative Islam" and "Progressive-Liberal Islam"".

issues associated with SARA –ethnicity (*Suku*), religion (*Agama*), race (*Ras*) and social classes (*Antar-golongan*)– are highly taboo to be polemically debated in the Indonesian public space (D'Haenens et al. 1999:130). In the New Order, the SARA policy was approached by the use of power rather than by common awareness through law enforcement or cultural and social processes. With the downfall of the regime in 1998, which was followed by democratization processes, religious and ethnic issues were easily utilized to stir up sectarian conflicts in some regions of the country. [188] Within a democratic atmosphere where civil society becomes strengthened, the SARA doctrine is increasingly approached much more from legal and cultural approaches. As the most popular channel of information in Indonesia, television is strongly regulated according to this policy with the enactment of the Broadcast Law in 2002.[189] Accordingly, broadcast activities have to be directed to maintain national unity and civic pluralism.

As far as the SARA policy is concerned, broadcasting religious programs has to be situated within the range of this policy. It should avoid issues that may raise polemics among the adherents of different religious denominations. Theoretically, religious programs that show commitments to civic pluralism will be widely welcomed to find a stage on – national – televisions. This fact may prevent persons with polemicist tendencies to host religious programs for their absolutist discourses may raise polemics that can lead to SARA disputes. Persons with liberal thought seem not to be entrusted, as well, to host religious programs on television, for their discourses could raise controversy. Both options seem not desirable by the television managers who aim at attracting as many spectators as possible. It can be said, therefore, that national television in Indonesia is a home for 'moderate' discourses of religion that highly correspond to the interests of all parties: the state, television managers and the majority of the audience.

[188] For further discussion how religious issues and media were employed to aggravate sectarian conflicts, see for example: Noorhaidi Hasan's (2005) *Laskar Jihad*, Robert W. Hefner's (2003) "Civic Pluralism Denied? The New Media and Jihadi Violence in Indonesia", and Patricia Spyer's (2001) "Fire without Smoke and Other Phantoms of Ambon's Violence: Media Effects, Agency and the Work of Imagination".

[189] The Press Law 40/1998 prohibits publication activities to include advertisements that contain humiliating elements to religious teachings and disrupt the harmony of religious life. The Broadcast Law 32/2002 clearly indicates a strong requirement of maintaining the national unity and a prohibition of broadcasting contents that problematize the SARA issues.

The success of Quraish Shihab in the new public sphere can be seen partly from his strong commitment to moderate Islam. In many occasions he emphasizes that "being moderate" reflects the true practice of Islam, for it is clearly enjoined by the Qur'an to describe the very character of Muslims, *umma wasaṭ* (middle people)[190] who are expected to act fairly (Shihab 2012b:I,415; see Chapter 5). Moderation enables Shihab to devise a theological ground for accommodating the common good embraced by the state for a pluralistic society. As discussed in the previous chapters, conceptualization of the common good in Islam has its foundational precedent in the concept of *maṣlaḥa* (pl. *maṣāliḥ*), which is a legal criterion or method that is geared toward finding the common good for various involved parties in a particular situation (Salvatore and Le Vine 2005:2; Zaman 2004:131–32). Muslim scholars believe that the *sharīʿa* is, in its essence, constitutive to human common good and "that it is from within the resources provided by the *sharīʿa* that the common good is further defined and sought" (Zaman 2004:146).

The presence of Shihab in an expanded public sphere is worth analysis in terms of the necessity from the part of the *ʿulamāʾ* to promote the good of moderate Islam. Shihab feels it necessary to plunge into the busy traffic of religious discourses by multiple claimants to religious authority who vigorously work in promoting their versions of religious virtues through the new media. At this point, Shihab's discourse of religion may not compete as much as with that of popular preachers on television. Rather, his moderate discourse of religion is primarily in competition with the vocal scripturalist or liberal discourses of religion that sometimes gain coverage on mainstream media, and are very often covered by their own alternative media, but significantly reach public attention.

At some point, the projection of moderate Islam can be seen as an attempt to maintain the hegemony of a particular discourse of religion. It is an endeavor on how a religious scholar presents his specific interests and world-views as the prevailing common good for the society in general. Hegemony here is the hegemony of ideas and has nothing to do with dictatorship. In Gramsci's theory of hegemony, "man is not ruled by force alone, but also by ideas." Gramsci's theory is laid on the contention that

[190] The Qur'anic prescription on Islamic moderation is Q. 2:143, "*And thus we have made you a middle community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you…*" See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WCGPFWdvgAc&index=8&list=PLGwvErsP8n7CtcVVu-VPEWxXFRNTexJu8 accessed on January 26, 2015.

the foundation of a ruling class is equivalent to the creation of ruling ideas (Bates 1975:351). Gramsci's notion of hegemony is not identical to dictatorship, but rather to leadership based on the consent of the led by "the diffusion and popularization of the world view of the ruling class" (Bates 1975:352). Gramsci made a distinction between political society, which is composed of state institutions: the government, court, police, army, etc., and civil society, which covers all private sectors: school, churches, clubs, press, etc. In this configuration of thought, "civil society is the marketplace of ideas" where intellectuals enter to seek public consent on particular contending cultures or ideologies (Bates 1975:353).

Shihab's appearance in one of the most widespread forms of communication media opens a prospect for a mode of hegemony in religious understanding within the Indonesian Muslim society. As far as the SARA policy and commitment to the Islamic normative doctrines are concerned, the moderate discourse of religion seems to surpass the scripturalist one, for the latter lacks commitment to civic pluralism, state of tolerance and recognition for social and civil plurality, which is highly encouraged by the state. It is also likely to surpass the liberal one for it is deemed as lacking in normative grounds. Taking these things into consideration, moderate Islam has a much greater prospect of staging in the new public sphere and religious scholars with moderate insights have much more opportunity to maintain their presence in the public space.

With regard to our discussion on Shihab's appearances on television, a sense of moderation is shown with his use of persuasive language and appreciation when dealing with differences. In a show on September 26, 2006 discussing Q. 2:62,[191] for example, Shihab explained that the believers, the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabians who believed in God and the Day of Judgment as delivered by the Prophet Muhammad would have their rewards from God. He disagrees with an interpretation that makes the verse a reason for equating all religions in the same truth, or religious pluralism as defined by the Indonesian *'Ulamā'* Council (MUI).[192] He views that differences in

[191] Q. 2:62, "*Indeed, those who believed, and those who were Jews, Christians and Sabeans [before Prophet Muhammad], those [among them] who believed in Allah and the Last Day and did righteousness will have their reward with their Lord, and no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve.*"

[192] In a *fatwā* issued in July 2005, MUI defines "religious pluralism" as a thought that views that all religions are basically equal in truth. Accordingly the adherents of each religion cannot unilaterally claim the truth in their own and the falsehood must belong to the others. In this regard, the MUI

belief must be seen as a fact of life. Tolerance is not intended to make different beliefs equal, but rather it must be understood as a demeanor to respect these differences. Nevertheless, Shihab underlines that people may remain with their own belief and should not polemically dispute with one another over the truth of religion in the world because the judgment will surely take place only in the hereafter. God will determine those who are on the right path and those who are misguided. And with His blessing, Shihab continues, God may forgive those misguided people and send them to His paradise.[193] With such an elaboration, Shihab highlights the uselessness of dispute upon whether someone's faith is correct or incorrect that may lead to unnecessary tensions and conflicts among adherents of different religions. By this, he affirms the importance of balance between being faithful in religion and preserving peaceful coexistence with adherents of other religions at the same time.

On other occasions, he has also given clear instruction about the importance of respecting differences. In the *Tafsir al-Misbah* show during the special edition of *Idul Adha* on October 26, 2012, Shihab affirmed the Islamic position with regard to the freedom of belief. Shihab insisted that "God does not force [people]; God invites, but does not force; so, do not be more vigorous than God."[194] Such an elaboration can be understood as a critique to those who are eager to impose their absolutist interpretations of religion on others. In the *Tafsir al-Misbah* show on July 14, 2013, he said that "Islam does not legalize bad methods [even] for good purposes."[195] This also can be understood as his response to certain groups that often use physical violence or force to promote a particular understanding of religion.

In a society where religious authority and the notion of authoritative sources of religion become a field of contestation, reference to the Qur'an and the Prophetic

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distinguishes religious pluralism from religious "plurality", which indicates the fact that in a certain area adherents of different religions coexist. According to MUI, religious pluralism contradicts the doctrine of Islam, while it acknowledges the possibility of mutual cooperation among adherents of different religions in social life (MUI 2011:96–7).

[193] During the *Tafsir al-Misbah* Show discussing Q. 11:111-116 on July 21, 2013, Shihab repeated his appeal to avoid self-judgment over others' belief by saying, "Is Islam absolutely a correct [religion]? [The audiences answered yes] It is your opinion. To the others, it is false. We are different. When will be the judgment? In the Day of Judgment. God will decide which is the correct one and that which is false. No need to quarrel here." Records of *Tafsir al-Misbah* are available on Metro TV's official website www.metrotvnews.com as well as on youtube. I benefitted them from both, YouTube especially for old records. *Tafsir al-Misbah: Surat al-Baqarah Ayat 62-65*, accessed from YouTube on August 26, 2013; *Tafsir al-Misbah: Surat Hud Ayat 111-116*, accessed from Metro TV's website on July 24, 2013.

[194] Accessed from YouTube on August 23, 2013.

[195] *Tafsir Al-Misbah: Surat Hud Ayat 50-60*, accessed from Metro TV's website on July 15, 2013.

tradition forms a common ground where all Muslims would be able to agree upon. In this regard, the theological foundation for civic pluralism would become meaningful if it is rooted at least from one of these two sources. In a show discussing Q. 9:23–35 on August 1, 2012, Shihab specifically closed the session by reading aloud the Prophet's treaty with the Christian community of Najran, a district some 700 km south of Mecca. The treaty testified the Prophet's commitment of interreligious relations. It consisted of several clauses covering the full of protection of the Najran Christians.[196] Part of the Najran Treaty that was read aloud by Quraish Shihab is as follows:

> "... I promise to protect and to defend them, and to protect their churches, their places of worship, the residence of their monks and pastors, and their sanctuaries that they commonly visit. I also promise to protect their religion, and their way of life wherever they are, like I defend myself, my families and those who share the same religion with me. [That] is because I have given to them a treaty supported by God, in which they have the same rights as those Muslims and have the same duties like them. ... Neither their bishopric is to be changed nor is the right of their monks to be removed..."[197]

Reading the Najran Treaty, Shihab seemingly felt compelled to retrieve the Muslim memory to the Prophet's way in dealing with the followers of other religions. It may reflect his concern with some conflicts and tensions ignited by religious sentiments in some regions in the country and with the increasing voices that claim over the absolutist interpretation of religion. Shihab seems to be aware about the potential conflicts caused by this phenomenon by calling the audience to the Prophetic ethics in dealing with differences. It is true that most of the Qur'anic verses enjoin tolerance in terms of differences in faith. Yet, Shihab on many occasions extends this notion to cover attitudes toward what has been deemed 'unorthodox' thoughts in Islam. He is against any anarchistic responses and coercive actions when dealing with this matter. He views that dialogue, discussion, or any other peaceful solution is the best way and preferable to encounter differences.[198] By doing so, he corresponds to the spirit of his era where civil society and democratization require not only the acknowledgement of the plurality in religion and society, but also "a

[196] Citing from another version of the Najran Pact, Maryam Sakeenah (2010:41) writes that the treaty consisted of several clauses covering human rights: the protection of Christians, freedom of worship, freedom to appoint their judges and to maintain their property, exemption from military service and the protection of war attack.

[197] *Tafsir al-Misbah: Surat at-Taubah Ayat 23-35*, accessed from Metro TV's official website on August 2, 2012.

[198] This can be seen, for example, from Shihab's preface to Taufik Adnan Kamal's (2005) *Rekonstruksi Sejarah al-Qur'an* (Reconstructing the History of the Qur'an) and Muchlis M. Hanafi's (2011) book, *Menggugat Ahmadiyah* (Suing Ahmadiyya).

commitment to engaging that plurality in a civic and pluralist manner" (Hefner 2003:159).

## Public Intellectual of the Qur'an

The position of Shihab on television might be best described as a public intellectual who serves the function of transmitting and popularizing Qur'anic messages through a power of rhetoric that features a rather discernable language that might be easily comprehended by the general public. The voluminous set of *Tafsir al-Misbah* and his other exegetical works are, in fact, consumption for professionals and educated people for their complexity might be troublesome for average readers. Reading exegetical works not only requires persistence in following discussions on linguistic aspects of key vocabularies of the Qur'an and Shihab's analyses thereof, but also of a certain degree of knowledge in other Islamic religious disciplines, such as the *Sunna*, the history of the Prophet, theology, and Islamic legal theories.

The notion of "public intellectual", as Nathan Crick observes, is frequently discussed in relation to the common phenomenon in the period of the European Enlightenment. It is a revolutionary belief among intellectuals at the time to disseminate science and philosophy that can be used to "enlighten" the state of public opinion, replacing the doctrinal way of thinking with the rational one (Crick 2006:128). In this regard, the role of rhetoric is very central to this dissemination. However, Crick disagrees with the notion of a public intellectual that puts emphasis merely on the power of rhetoric without crediting the relevance of an intellectual's scholarship and the recognition of his or her works by the public. Neither is he convinced with Gramsci's idea of "organic intellectual", which in his view only respects theories that are immediately put into practice and tends to dismiss the value of dedicated intellectual works. Thus, Crick offers another definition that highly values the importance of intellectual works. According to him, public intellectuals are "those who react to the problems of their socio-historical situation by creating enduring works that broadly influence cultural habits and institutional practices during their lifetime" (Crick 2006:131). Crick aims to underline what makes the contributions of an intellectual unique is that they produce intellectual works that may affect long-term impacts on the public consciousness.

Quraish Shihab's position as a public intellectual of the Qur'an can be seen from two aspects: first, his exegetical works, which have been reprinted several times[199] and are likely to be successful in targeting the audiences with a particular culture of readership, and second, his public lectures and sermons that fit another segment of his audiences who have less interest in enduring serious reading of religious intellectual works. Shihab's appearance on television well represents the second aspect where rhetoric is used to simplify the complexity of the concepts and the intricate debates as written in his exegetical works by giving some illustrations that help mass audiences understand Qur'anic messages.

In the *Tafsir al-Misbah* program, Shihab usually begins his show by giving a preliminary introduction about the general idea of a group of verses that will be discussed. He reads every verse and gives an interpretation of it, elucidating key vocabulary of the verse, its context and its significance to contemporary Muslim life. He is well organized in discussing the topics as mentioned in a verse and evades discussing issues that are not relevant to explain the meaning of the verse. He often uses popular analogies make it easier for the audience to discern the meaning of the Qur'an.

On October 5, 2005, for example, when explaining the meaning of *sabʿa samāwāt* (seven heavens) in Q. 67:3,[200] Shihab disagreed with a popular but obsolete 'scientific' interpretation of the verse that interpreted the phrase as "seven planets". Shihab gave an articulation that corresponded to his contention about the dynamic nature of scientific development. He affirmed that science always developed and accordingly, the discovery of planets might exceed the number of seven. Thus, he brought the meaning of the phrase back to the context of the Prophet's Arabs where the word *sabʿ* (seven) did not always indicate the number between six and eight, but designates "many" instead. Giving an analogy, he emphasized that it was just like an

[199] To provide quantitative data, Shihab's *Membumikan al-Qur'an* has been reprinted more than twenty times, and his *Wawasan al-Qur'an* and his voluminous commentary *Tafsir al-Misbah* more than ten times.

[200] Q. 67:3, "*Who created seven heavens in layers. You do not see in the creation of the Most Merciful any inconsistency. So return [your] vision [to the sky]; do you see any breaks?*"

Indonesian phrase "1001 reasons", which was used to indicate the meaning of "many reasons".[201]

In *Lentera Hati* that was broadcast on June 6, 2004 – to give another example – Shihab attempted to re-actualize and simplify an intricate theological concept of *qadar* (God's Decree) in a way that highly corresponded to the rational trend of modern society. *Qadar* was one of the most polemical concepts that formed a heated political and theological dispute in the earlier history of the Muslim community. The general conception of it suggests that God has decreed according to His knowledge all that has happened and will happen in the universe. Because it remains unclear how things have been divinely determined, *qadar* has been understood by Muslims in various ways. In the show, Shihab highlighted that the differences upon its definition were closely linked to the Muslim political disputes in the post-ʿAlī period. The Umayyad rulers employed a fatalist doctrine of *qadar* in order to justify the legitimacy of their power. In response to this situation, there emerged a group that rejected fatalism and confirmed human free will.[202] Setting aside such theological polemics, Shihab called upon the necessity of return to the Qur'an. Citing Q. 25:2, he emphasized that everything had been created with its precise determination (*taqdīr*), i.e., measurement and system attached to every creature. According to him, the difference between the universe and humans in terms of *taqdīr* rested in the point that the former could not choose its own *taqdīr*, while the latter could choose their own as long it was still under their capacity as destined by God. Explaining to the audience, Shihab gave an analogy of a car with a top speed of 250 km/h. The driver might choose to drive the car at whatever speed as long as he ran it under its top speed. However, he would not be able to drive it by exceeding its top speed, even though he exerted every effort. In other words, *taqdīr,* in Shihab's view, is the maximum limit and capacity of creature.[203]

Through intellectual works and rhetoric, Shihab has more opportunities to offer education to the public and to "enlighten" the state of public opinion with his

[201] At this point, Shihab might differ from al-Shaʿrāwī who used to employ a simplistic understanding when he is convinced that the Qur'an is perceived as the origin of modern scientific discoveries (Chih and Mayeur-Jaouen 2002:194). Shihab seems to avoid giving such simplistic interpretations with regard to scientific discoveries.

[202] In the early history of Islam, the free-will doctrine was later popularized by the group of *al-Qadariyya*, while the fatalist doctrine was identical to the current of *al-Jabriyya.*

[203] Lentera Hati on Metro TV, *Takdir*, accessed from YouTube on December 23, 2013.

proposed proper understanding of religion. His written works may take a longer time to influence the long-term habits of a culture, but through his rhetoric-based lectures he is able to directly target the average audience. With rhetoric, Shihab situates himself midway between the "great minds" of the *ʿulamāʾ* and the average minds of people. The role of rhetoric, as Alan Wolfe suggests, is highly important to dilute and disseminate the truth of religion to a rather passive public by which a public intellectual can bring his academic expertise and link its significance to the social issues of the day in a language that can be understood by the general public (Crick 2006:128).[204]

## Opening New Horizons for Religious Civility

The publicity equipped with expertise, which is enjoyed by Quraish Shihab to a considerable degree, features his authority in religion in the new public sphere. He emerges to become an important reference when questions on religious issues are consulted. What is interesting is that Shihab sometimes conveys an interpretation that is not always in line with the common understanding of Indonesian Muslims concerning particular topics. This stimulates the public, especially the middle class, to rethink what has been taken for granted from their parents, teachers, and community. Indeed, this rethinking does not always come up by making a direct reference to Shihab's lectures on television. Some actively consult his works upon a particular topic that comes from what they experience in their daily life. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the significance of Shihab's public appearances on television, which not only feature him, but also his intellectual works.[205] With his public appearances, Qur'anic exegesis slowly leaves its "exclusive" culture and makes those who do not experience formal Islamic religious learning become more acquainted with the Qur'anic discourse.

[204] Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā writes that once he asked Muḥammad ʿAbduh to write down his *tafsīr* lectures in order for the wider public unable to attend his lectures to become acquainted with his idea of reform (*al-iṣlāḥ*). At the time, ʿAbduh was reluctant to do so because he deemed that the audible speech (*al-kalām al-masmū*) was more powerful in influencing people than the readable speech (*al-kalām al-maqrū*). ʿAbduh argued that people would have better understanding of messages from speech than from a book (Riḍā 2006:766). ʿAbduh might reflect the situation of his time when written media were less effective to disseminate his reform propaganda to the larger segment of the society with a weak culture of readership. Thanks to Rashīd Riḍā who had recorded his master's exegetical lectures in his *Tafsir al-Manār*.

[205] According to Yanti, Shihab does not demand payment for his show on television. In return, he requires that some of his works be featured during the show. Interview with Yanti on February 18, 2014 in Jakarta.

The following are some illustrations on how Quraish Shihab and his works are made a reference for some religious questions that arise within Indonesian society. As has been elaborated above, Shihab's intellectual works are widely appreciated among urban educated Muslims who tend to accept interpretation of religious doctrines that correspond to the exigencies of contemporary situations of Muslim society.

Hikmat Sanusi, a social observer, praises the broadcast of *Tafsir al-Misbah* as a true sense of Islamic propagation (*dakwah*). He was upset with the staging of soap operas (*sinetron*) during Ramadan that feature what he calls "the bewildering mixture between religion and mysticism". He has the impression from such soap operas that preaching religion cannot be done effectively without frightening people with evil spirits to religious submission. Sanusi is deeply impressed with the appearance of Quraish Shihab on television who, according to him, can provide the audience with a fresh understanding of how to be a true Muslim in the true sense of the word. He is impressed, for example, with the way Shihab interprets the word *kāfir* whose common understanding among many Indonesian Muslims indicates exclusively the meaning of "being non-Muslim". Shihab views, as Sanusi scrutinizes, that the word does not always refer to non-Muslims, for *kufr* originally means "to cover up" or "to hide". Sanusi observes from Shihab's explanation that in the Islamic context *kufr* means concealing the truth of God's word. So, corrupters, thieves, robbers, and terrorists are *kāfir*s regardless of their religion. In this regard, Sanusi views that Shihab has opened up a new horizon of religious understanding,[206] leading the public to rethink a religious doctrine that is taken for granted from the society.

The second round of Jakarta's 2012 gubernatorial election,[207] which displayed a straight fight between two couples of candidates: Fauzi Bowo (incumbent) with Nachrowi Romli (a retired general) and Joko Widodo (popularly called by his

[206] www.thejakartapost.com/news/2005/11/09/mysticism-religious-propagation-counterproductive.html accessed on July 3, 2013.

[207] The first round of the election was held on July 11, 2012, and was followed by six couples of candidates: Fauzi Bowo-Nachrowi Romli (Democrat Party, PD), Hidayat Nur Wahid-Didik Rachbini (Prosperous Justice Party, PKS & National Mandate Party, PAN), Alex Noerdin-Nono Sampurno (Golkar Party & Development Unity Party, PPP), Joko Widodo-Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle, PDIP & Gerindra Party), Hendardji Soepandji-Ahmad Reza Patria (independent candidates) and Faisal Basri-Biem Triani Benjamin (independent candidates). Because none of the candidates had obtained more than fifty percent of the votes, according to the Election Law of the Capital City, a second round of election must be held (Miichi 2014:61–2). The second round was held on September 20, 2012, featuring a competition of the two top winners of the votes: Jokowi Widodo-Basuki Tjahaja Purnama and Fauzi Bowo-Nachrowi Romli. During the first round of the election, none of ethno-religious sentiments was extensively employed.

nickname Jokowi, Mayor of Surakarta) with Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (popular nickname Ahok, member of parliament), depicts how ethnic sentiment was emphasized and religious identity was contested. Both Bowo and Ramli are Muslims of the Betawi ethnicity,[208] while Jokowi is a Muslim of the Javanese ethnicity and Ahok is a Christian of the Chinese ethnicity. To win public attention, Fauzi Bowo's team emphasized the ethno-religious backgrounds of the candidates, implying that Jokowi and Ahok were outsiders with dubious ethno-religious backgrounds (Miichi 2014:59). Black campaigns were blown up against Jokowi and Ahok. While Ahok represented double minorities: being Christian and of Chinese descent, Jokowi was framed as an uncommitted Muslim and that his mother was not a Muslim.[209] The issue soon attracted widespread attention, especially after a popular *dangdut* singer and preacher, Rhoma Irama (b. 1946), who supported Fauzi Bowo, urged people to choose leaders with the same faith and never to vote for non-Muslims at a mosque gathering (Miichi 2014:64) by citing a Qur'anic text Q. 4:144. Irama's controversial sermon was recorded and posted on YouTube, and was widely debated in the mass media.[210]

When attending the *Idul Fitri* sermon[211] at a local mosque in Jakarta, Abdul Qowi Bastian who worked for the daily English newspaper, the Jakarta Globe based in Jakarta, lamented that a ritual moment was used for a political campaign. He felt depressed when the preacher quoted a verse from the Qur'an (Q. 5:51) and said that Muslims should not choose non-Muslims to be their leaders (*auliyā'*).[212] He reached for

[208] The Betawi are the descendants of people living around Batavia, the colonial name for Jakarta.

[209] Such a black campaign was reproduced when Joko Widodo was running for the presidential election in 2014, for he was the frontrunner in Indonesia's presidential race.

[210] Q. 4:144, "*O you who have believed, do not take the disbelievers as allies instead of the believers. Do you wish to give Allah against yourselves a clear case*?" Rhoma Irama's speech can be seen on this link http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lMDH30zXlkc accessed on November 25, 2014.

[211] *Idul Fitri* is the day when Muslims end the fasting of Ramadan. They begin the day by praying at the mosque, which is followed by listening to the sermon.

[212] I need to touch upon the issue as to why the preacher in question translated and understood the Arabic word *auliyā'* as leaders. Such understanding is not in line with Muslim exegetical tradition that mainly translates *auliyā'* as "helpers, supporters or friends". It can partly be explained that many Indonesian translations of the Qur'an translated the word as leaders (*pemimpin-pemimpin*), which accordingly implies the prohibition of Muslims to take Jews and Christians as their leaders. Regarding this question, Johanna Pink has conducted a survey upon the translation of the word *auliyā'* by Muslim Arab, Indonesian and Turkish commentators. She finds out that most commentators translate the word as helpers or friends that suggest the meaning of closeness and intimacy. She views that translating *auliyā'* as leaders becomes a peculiarity of commentators who are very much influenced by the experience of colonialism. This is apparent, for example, in Hamka's translation and the earlier editions of the Qur'an translation by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (Pink 2010:40–3, 51). However, there is a shift away from such translation in some more recent works. The newest edition of the Qur'an translation by Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs translates *auliyā'* as friends, and Quraish Shihab (2012b:III,149) interprets it as close friends or helpers.

his iPhone and went to the iQuran application in order to know the translation of the word *auliyā'* in the verse cited by the preacher (Q. 5:51).[213] He found that *auliyā'* was translated as friends, not leaders. He then approached the preacher after the prayer session to ask for clarification. Yet, the preacher insisted that *auliyā'* meant leaders or masters. Not convinced with the preacher's clarification, he consulted Shihab's *Tafsir al-Lubab*, and found out that Shihab did not translate the word to leaders, but to faithful friends (*kawan yang dapat dipercaya*) instead. He highlights Shihab's interpretation that "Islam allows Muslims to deal kindly and justly with non-Muslims as long as they are kind and courteous." Supporting this argument, he consulted another verse (Q. 60:9)[214] that tells about the prohibition of making non-Muslims *auliyā'* if they fight Muslim belief, drive Muslims out of their homes, and support others in driving them out. In this regard, Bastian concludes that the Qur'anic verses have to be understood not only in comparison with other verses, but also according to their particular contexts.[215]

Following a global trend, in Indonesia's recent decades the public use of Islamic symbols has been increasing significantly along with the growth of religious awareness within the society since the 1970s, which was then energized by a political turn in the 1990s (Hefner 2000; Liddle 1996; Smith-Hefner 2007). One particularly vivid expression of this religious consciousness is Muslim women's wearing of headscarves. It is commonly understood as symbolizing piety for Muslim women and sometimes is perceived as a standard of religious orthodoxy in the sense that a Muslim woman who does not wear headscarf would be considered to have a lesser quality of Islam-ness.[216]

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[213] Q. 5:51, "*O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are allies of one another. And whoever among you makes them allies, then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.*"

[214] Q. 60:9, "*Allah only forbids you [of making good relation] from those who fought you because of religion and expelled you from your homes and backed up (others) in your expulsion that you make them allies. And whoever makes them allies, then they are the wrongdoers.*"

[215] See: http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/archive/can-muslims-take-non-muslims-as-leaders/ accessed on July 5, 2013.

[216] Resurgence in the adoption of Islamic symbols and the practice of Islam in the 1970s and the 1980s was followed by massive adoption of headscarves or veiling among Muslim women as an expression of Islamic piety. Nevertheless, contextual studies of women and Islamization reveal complex and contested meanings of and motives for wearing headscarves. Research from diverse Muslim countries suggests that this global expression of Muslim piety is accompanied by localized reference to tradition, class, status and politics, as well as personal and public ethics (Smith-Hefner 2007:389). For Indonesian Muslim women affiliated with Islamist movements, wearing a headscarf might be seen as a symbol of piety and political expression. Yet, for Muslim women in general, it might be best seen as an attempt to reconcile modernity, autonomy, and a heightened commitment to religion (Jones 2007; Smith-Hefner 2007).

Even worse, some who refuse the notion of the religious obligation of wearing the headscarf are frequently accused of being the followers of liberal Muslims whose thoughts face strong resistance, especially from the Islamists in Indonesia's recent decades.

Dian Kuswandini, a journalist of the daily English newspaper The Jakarta Post, tells her story when she was once tagged by a note on the social media of Facebook by one of her male friends. The note recounts that once a non-Muslim man raised a question to an Islamic cleric about why Islam obliged Muslim women to wear the hijab. The cleric answered by giving an analogy of two candies: wrapped and unwrapped which were dropped to the floor. The cleric ensured that people would certainly pick the wrapped candy because it was the clean one. Kuswandini felt degraded with this analogy. She admits that it was not the first time she was engaged in a conversation with Muslim men with what she calls the "I am more Muslim than you" syndrome. She concedes that she was even called a follower of the Liberal Muslim Network (*Jaringan Islam Liberal*, JIL),[217] just because she argued and refused to be forced into wearing the hijab. She consulted Quraish Shihab's *Jilbab: Pakaian Wanita Muslimah* (Jilbab: Muslim Women's Attire) where the author presents different opinions among Muslim scholars regarding the limits of women's body that should be covered properly (*ʿaura*). She finds Shihab's opinion more convincing because he deals with the issue from various perspectives instead of sticking to a certain opinion uncritically. She views that Shihab's stance with regard to the issue of hijab is more relevant when he emphasizes that the ruling of hijab is a matter of legal divergence.[218]

The question of hijab, actually, had been raised by Asmini Pohang directly to Quraish Shihab during a show called *Lebaran Bersama Kelarga Shihab* (the Feast of Breaking the Fast with the Shihabs) which aired on Metro TV in September 2009,

[217] Beginning from the 2000s, there emerged voices that persistently campaign against what is deemed as corrosively secular and liberal thoughts of religion. Islamist groups are those vocal actors of this campaign, which is commonly delivered through mosque sermons and public religious discussion, as well as books, pamphlets and social media. "Proper" Islamic dress, which is full-length garb consisting of a long, drably colored and shapeless robe complemented with headscarf that reaches shoulders and covers the chest, is one of the issues they campaign for. Women's other dresses in public, including the ones that cover women's body but still reveal the shape of it, are considered un-Islamic. See, for example, Abu al-Ghifari's (2003) *Kudung Gaul: Berjilbab tapi Telanjang (Sexy Headscarves: Veiled but Naked).*

[218] See: www.thejakartaglobe.com/archive/why-some-muslim-women-dont-wear-hijab/ accessed on July 5, 2013.

where Najwa Shihab, Quraish Shihab's second daughter, became the host of the show.[219] Wearing a 'less proper' headscarf in the show, Najwa looked a bit clumsy when listening to the question, because Pohang explicitly asked Shihab's opinion on the hijab and its implementation within his family. In response to the question, Shihab was persistent with his opinion that the hijab and women's *ʿaura* were a matter of divergence among Muslim scholars. According to him, some scholars contend that women must cover the whole body including their face. Some contend that they must cover all their body except their face and hands. And some others go to a more relaxed view that women may leave their hair uncovered as long as they wear respectable clothing (*pakaian terhormat*). Accordingly, Shihab put emphasis that women should not be forced to wear a headscarf since there is an opinion that allows them to leave it. "Wearing a headscarf is good, but it might have exceeded what is required by God," Shihab closed his answer (see Chapter 2).[220]

## Conclusion

There is a growing concern in recent decades regarding the diminished role and authority of the intellectuals in the public sphere, especially with the emergence of new communication media where new contenders offer more attractive opinions to the public. The voices of the intellectuals "appear to have no more influence or authority than any other voice among the cacophony of voices" in the media that hit the society every day. In this situation, the intellectuals seem to "have nothing more insightful or compelling to say than what is already being said by others" (Caroll 2008:109). This gives us an illustration about what really happens in the new public sphere created by Indonesian commercialized television that 'allows' only religious programs that secure their commercial ends on stage. Accordingly, marketing piety and religious morality by popular preachers, or those celebrities acting as preachers, constitutes the dominant discourse and offers the greatest business prospect to attract as many as viewers who are experiencing a radical shift of religiosity and spirituality in a new social and historical context.

[219] Some who disagree with Shihab's opinion on women's headscarves view that his opinion is invalid and less academic because they contend that Shihab says so in defense of some of his daughters, including Najwa Shihab, a popular TV anchor, who does not wear a headscarf in her daily life.

[220] For further observation, see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-yVRjW7IdA&index=7&list=PL4BF7E495DC370673 accessed on July 16, 2013.

The staging of Quraish Shihab with his Qur'an-based intellectual discourse in the most popular media in Indonesia is of little opportunity where intellectual discourse of religion can take place in the new public sphere. Of course, this can only happen after some adaptation and negotiation with the electronic modes of publicity. Representing the *'ulamā'*, Shihab attempts to penetrate the public sphere and offers an alternative discourse of religious civility that 'challenges' the inundation of religious discourse by new actors outside the *'ulamā'*-tic circle.

Chapter 5

# Toward Creating a School of Qur'anic Exegesis

Part of Quraish Shihab's strategies to re-center Qur'an-based religious civility is manifest with the creation of the Center for Qur'anic Studies (*Pusat Studi al-Qur'an*, PSQ). It is an attempt to accommodate his ideal in a collective action in disseminating and nurturing Qur'an-based religious intellectualism. PSQ holds a number of programs that target the interests of various segments from university students, *pesantren* alumni, teachers, and mass audiences. In its recent development, PSQ is deemed successful in maintaining its existence as a reputable institution in Qur'anic studies and contributing to the scholarly religious discourse of the Qur'an in Indonesia. It begins to actively expand its influence by cooperating with several institutions, both domestic and overseas. Due to its good reputation and rising fame, PSQ often becomes a target for study visits. This chapter discusses PSQ's role in introducing a research and education program in Qur'anic exegesis. It also highlights another side of it as a potential intellectual movement, starting from the days the idea came into existence through becoming more clearly defined in a collective action, and eventually taking a formalized structure.

## Center for Qur'anic Studies

The Center for Qur'anic Studies (*Pusat Studi al-Qur'an*, PSQ) is an emerging institution designed to educate professional Qur'an exegetes who will take the task of articulating the Qur'anic teachings within the dynamic life of Muslim society. The institution, which was founded on September 18, 2004 by Quraish Shihab, has launched a number of programs that are directed toward what it calls "indigenizing the Qur'anic values within a pluralistic society" (PSQ 2009). To achieve its goal, PSQ invites professors of Qur'anic studies who share the same mission to set strategies and to contribute to the processes of teaching and supervising for those participants of its programs. The idea of "indigenizing" requires that the institution have to prepare programs and strategies that fit different segments of society who come from various backgrounds of education and professions. Nevertheless, it is education for young

professional exegetes that actually becomes PSQ's major project, for it attempts to prepare new functionaries capable of assuming the task of religious scholars.

The impetus that led Shihab to found PSQ was his concern about the absence of an institution that seriously aims at becoming a "laboratory" for Qur'anic studies from which potential cadres of Muslim exegetes can learn, discuss, and become actively involved in research projects in this field. He views that instructions of the Qur'an in the mosques or other religious learning circles are not prepared to equip students with key tools for understanding and interpreting the Qur'anic text. And if there any, they are not carried out properly and systematically.[221] In fact, serious studies on the Qur'an have been carried out at many of Indonesian Islamic universities where students are attending classes on methods and theories of Qur'an interpretation, the sciences of the Qur'an, as well as the Arabic language. Yet, Shihab seems not satisfied with the achievement, probably because he gets the impression that Qur'anic studies at Indonesian higher educational institutions does not represent his ideal in producing new exegetes of the Qur'an.

Some may raise a question as to why Quraish Shihab had to establish an independent institution and did not initiate to implant his project within the academic circle of the Islamic State University (UIN) of Jakarta, given the fact that he is Professor of Qur'anic exegesis and was rector of the university for two periods between 1992 and 1998. It is not easy to give an exact answer. A simple reason for Shihab not to pursue his projects within the structure of a state university might be bureaucratic and structural. A state university has its own orientation and roadmap of education, and has already had a clear target group and stages of study. To implant his project within a state university would force him to deal with complex bureaucratic matters, and not to mention the politics of academia and contestation between the proponents of the normative approach and those of the critical approach to the studies of religion and religious texts.[222] Meanwhile, an independent institution

[221] Interview with Quraish Shihab on July 24, 2012 in Ciputat, and with Edi Junaedi on October 29, 2014.

[222] The most recent transformation of the State Islamic University of Jakarta occurred in 2002 when Azyumardi Azra (b. 1955), a prominent Indonesian public intellectual and Muslim thinker, became rector. The transformation marked that the university not only focuses on Islamic studies, but also welcomes secular disciplines such as mathematics, biology, physics, chemistry, medicine, sociology, and politics. Since then, the university has shown a strong commitment to become a research-based university. Western-inspired critical approaches to religious studies become widely adopted by its academicians and the university's journal in Islamic studies, STUDIA ISLAMIKA, emerged to become one of the best Indonesian journals in this field. Azra was, by all means, an important actor behind the

enables him to pursue his ideals in all kinds of formats (e.g., short, intensive courses and trainings) for various target groups, thus not exclusively for formal students only. Another important reason is the notion of religious authority, which is by no means a state project. By executing his ideas in an independent institution, Shihab has a wider opportunity to enhance his reputation as an independent scholar and authority in religion.

The idea to establish a center for Qur'anic studies first came up in the late 1990s, when Shihab left his position as rector of UIN Jakarta. In its earlier years, Shihab was assisted by Nasaruddin Umar who was, at that time, a senior lecturer at the university. Umar was the architect of the would-be PSQ's initial programs, playing important roles in formulating ideas, consolidating resources and initiating preliminary activities, especially during Shihab's diplomatic mission to Cairo (1999-2002). Umar began to invite students and professors for limited discussions on Qur'anic topics as an attempt to socialize this intellectual project and to create an intellectual community that would be beneficial once PSQ was officially launched.[223] Following his return in 2002, Shihab showed more persistence in realizing this intellectual project, especially after he found out that UIN Jakarta was being transformed to become a research-based university by developing interdisciplinary research programs for its religious studies. He got the impression that with this new policy, the university institutionally would show less interest in the purpose of making its Islamic higher education a place of incubation for the education of professional exegetes. This dissatisfaction was then followed by the creation of a strategic and collective action, which was symbolized with the official opening of the main building of PSQ on September 18, 2004 by the Minister of Religious Affairs, Said Agil Husin al-Munawar. The building is located adjacent to the post-graduate complex of UIN Jakarta. It consists of four floors: underground, ground, first, and second floors

adoption of critical studies of religion into the university's curricula and the success of STUDIA ISLAMIKA. For a short history of UIN Jakarta, see http://www.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/tentang-uin.html accessed on October 4, 2014, and for further reading on Azyumardi Azra's role as rector, see Oman Fathurahman's (2007) "Prof. Dr. Azyumardi Azra, MA: Mengantarkan UIN Jakarta Menjadi Universitas Berkelas Dunia dan Universitas Riset", and. I am grateful to Faried Saenong and Media Zainul Bahri, a lecturer at UIN Jakarta, who made me aware to point out this issue. Conversations with Saenong on February 21, 2014 in Jakarta, and with Zainul Bahri on October 25, 2014.

[223] Edi Junaedi, Nasaruddin Umar's secretary at the time, explained to me that initial activities had been intended to meet the purpose once PSQ was officially launched; it had become already well known among certain circles of Muslim academia. Interview with Edi Junaedi on October 29, 2014.

which function as a meeting room, the office rooms, a library[224] and an office for the Lentera Hati Press, respectively. Other separated buildings are a dormitory for the participants of exegesis training, which is located in a residential area in Cirendeu – some two kilometers from the PSQ main building – and a complex of *Bayt al-Qur'an*, which is located in the middle of vacant land in Pondok Cabe, South Tangerang or some four kilometers from the main building.

To run the programs of PSQ, Quraish Shihab is assisted by the members of the Expert Board (*Dewan Pakar*). They are those professors or senior lecturers in the field of Qur'anic studies – mostly from UIN Jakarta – with whom Shihab has been familiar and had worked together on some occasions before.[225] Intellectually, they are scholars with a leaning toward normative approaches in religion. Their role is to conceptualize PSQ's programs, to provide material for lectures, training and discussions, and to offer mentoring and supervision for all programs organized by PSQ. So far, there has been no particular mechanism to select the members of the Expert Board; they are just selected based mainly on their expertise of Qur'anic studies and a commonality in vision and mission with PSQ.

An important program initiated by PSQ is the Education for Young Exegetes (*Pendidikan Kader Mufassir*, PKM), which was first held in 2005. In the beginning, PKM only served to provide financial allowances and academic supervision to its participants who were at the time in the process of writing their thesis. After some evaluation, the program was re-conceptualized and re-organized. In 2007, the program was designed not only to cover academic supervision, but also to offer an intensive six-month course on methods and theories of Qur'anic interpretation by

[224] In 2012, the PSQ library had a collection of some 4000 printed books and was visited by 2229 visitors. See http://psq.or.id/news/perpustakaan-pusat-studi-al-quran-psq-digital-library-of-al-quran-dilia-4/ accessed on January 1, 2015.

[225] To mention some, Nasaruddin Umar (b. 1959, Professor of Qur'anic Exegesis at UIN Jakarta), Ahmad Thib Raya (b. 1955, Professor of the Arabic Language at UIN Jakarta), Salman Harun (b. 1945, Professor of Qur'anic Exegesis at UIN Jakarta), Darwis Hude (b. 1958, Professor of Qur'anic Exegesis at College of Qur'anic Studies Jakarta), Asep Usman Ismail (b. 1960, senior lecturer in Qur'anic Exegesis at UIN Jakarta), A. Wahib Mu'thi (senior lecturer in Qur'anic Exegesis at UIN Jakarta) and Muchlis M. Hanafi (Chairperson of Qur'anic Studies at the Committee for Supervising the Qur'anic Codices at the Ministry of Religious Affairs). All of the above members of the Expert Board earned their doctoral degrees from the Indonesian State Islamic University of Jakarta, except Muchlis Hanafi, who obtained his doctoral degree from al-Azhar University in Cairo in 2006.

means of which the recruits are expected to master important requirements to become future exegetes.[226]

The subjects taught during the program range from the history of Qur'anic interpretation, the sciences of the Qur'an, the science of Arabic eloquence (*balāgha*), hadith criticism, and some introductions to modern approaches to the Qur'an. The teaching activities take place in the PSQ main building – in the meeting room and occasionally in the library. Basically, the literature consulted and discussed in the class depends on the mentor, but mostly from Arabic books, such as *al-Tafsīr wa Rijāluh* of al-Fāḍil ibn ʿAshūr, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn* of Muhammad Husein al-Dhahabi, *Manāhil al-ʿIrfān* of ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm al-Zarqānī, *Mabāḥith fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* of Ṣubḥ al-Ṣāliḥ, *Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr* of Khālid al-Sabt, *ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* of Nūr al-Dīn ʿItr, *al-Dakhīl fī al-Tafsīr* of Ibrāhīm Khalīfa, *Ṭuruq Takhrīj al-Ḥadīth* of ʿAbd al-Muhdī ʿAbd al-Qadīr, and *al-Balāgha li al-Jāmiʿ* of Hidayat (in Indonesian).[227] Shihab's works are also recommended; especially his newly published book *Kaidah Tafsir* (the Principles of Interpretation, 2013). The use of references by Muslim scholars might be due to PSQ's tendency to draw its research programs by maintaining continuity with a sort of 'orthodoxy' in the Islamic tradition of Qur'anic studies. It goes without saying that the lecturers involved in its programs are much more familiar with Arabic sources than any other Western sources, for example. Quraish Shihab occasionally gives his lectures, and frequently gives the floor to raise questions or present some problems pertinent to their current research.

The potential recruits of the PKM program are limited only for those post-graduate students, Master's or Ph.D. students, who have a good command of Qur'anic knowledge, as well as of the Arabic language. They are recruited after having passed a process of selection by the representatives of PSQ.[228] During the program, participants

[226] It seems that the joining of Muchlis M. Hanafi, a devout protégé of M. Quraish Shihab, who just came back from Cairo after successfully obtaining his Ph.D. degree in Qur'anic exegesis from al-Azhar, energizes PSQ. Hanafi, at the time, was supposed to be a lecturer at the State School of Islamic Studies in Surakarta, but Shihab required that he be moved to Jakarta in order to take some role at PSQ in addition to his official profession as a civil servant at the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Considering a special relation between Hanafi and Shihab, it is likely that Hanafi was more ready to conceptualize, guard, and implement Shihab's ideas in practice. Concluded from my interviews with Muchlis Hanafi on July 23, 2012 and on October 13, 2014, and with Farid Saenong on February 21, 2014.

[227] According to Muchlis Hanafi, the books used during the program might be changed depending on the discretion of the lecturers. Interview with Muchlis Hanafi on July 23, 2012.

[228] The selection committee only receives applications from post-graduate students who are currently conducting research on any Qur'an-related topic. The selection is intended to measure their

are given modest monthly financial allowances and access to PSQ's facilities, and those who come from outside Jakarta are provided with free accommodations and a return ticket. It is most likely that the recruits are those students who are interested in normative approaches to the Qur'an, and aim at pursuing their career as religious scholars.[229]

PSQ works seriously to extend its intellectualizing programs by targeting other segments of society. In 2009, it launched a program called Post-Memorization of the Qur'an (*Pasca Tahfidz*). The program is designed for those memorizers of the Qur'an who mostly do not enjoy proper, formal education in school or at university. The backdrop of this program is a concern about the fact that most of those memorizers are not well equipped with knowledge on the meanings of the Qur'an. PSQ finds out that many of them come from families that are economically unfortunate. Some leave their formal education and devote their life to memorizing the Qur'an. This six-month program not only offers them courses on Qur'an exegesis and other basic religious knowledge, but also trains them with some managerial and entrepreneurship skills.[230] The participants are recruited from *pesantren*s, traditional establishments of Islamic religious learning. During the course, the participants live in a dormitory called *Bayt al-Qur'an* (BQ), which is equipped with a library, a teaching room, and a mosque located in Pondok Cabe, South Tangerang. Shihab sometimes invites them to his house in Jeruk Purut, South Jakarta, for listening to his lectures. Along with courses and accommodation facilities, the participants are also awarded a modest allowance and a return ticket.[231]

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competence in Arabic classical literature, and the significance of their research proposal. Personal communication with Faiq Ihsan Anshori on October 31, 2014, and Syafi'uddin al-Ayyubi on November 3, 2014.

[229] Based on the PSQ report of 2012, PKM participants reach the number of 107. Each batch usually consists of 10 to 18 participants. Most of them (more than 90 percent), however, come from Islamic universities in Jakarta: State Islamic University, Institute of Qur'anic Sciences (*Institut Ilmu al-Qur'an, IIQ*), and the College of Qur'anic Sciences (*Perguruan Tinggi Ilmu al-Qur'an, PTIQ*). It seems that a six-month program is too long for post-graduate students outside Jakarta to leave academic activities at their home universities.

[230] The participants usually open their stalls after public lectures or religious gatherings attended by surrounding communities, which are regularly held in the *Bayt al-Qur'an*'s mosque. They are also trained in management of farming and husbandry. Observation and conversation with some participants of the *Pasca Tahfidz* program on July 4-10, 2012. Some of the alumni are also involved in PSQ's sheep farming program in Sukabumi, West Java. In the beginning of 2014, the number of the sheep reached 170. Conversation with Muhammad Arifin on February 27, 2014.

[231] According to the PSQ report of 2013, from 2009 to 2013 the number of participants for the program of *Pasca Tahfidz* is 214. Most of them come from *pesantren*s in Central and East Java.

Moreover, PSQ also organizes a program called Training of Trainers (TOT) that offers short courses to upgrade the intellectual competence of preachers and teachers of the Qur'an. The material delivered in the course generally consists of an introduction to principles and methods of Qur'an interpretation.[232] The emphasis is put on the importance of religious moderation (*wasaṭiyya*) and tolerance. So far, this program has been held in various cities in Indonesia such as Banda Aceh, Surakarta, Makassar, Kupang, Ambon and Sorong. The participants are around forty persons in each program.

On some particular occasions PSQ, through its Expert Board, actively holds Qur'an-based lectures that target mass audiences. They sometimes take place at the mosque of *Bayt al-Qur'an*, shopping centers, schools, and clubs. To extend its influence, it also maintains cooperation not only with domestic institutions but also with some foreign counterparts, especially from Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, and Morocco.[233] Occasionally, it also receives study visits from university students where a representative of PSQ introduces its cultural and intellectual projects, and methods of Qur'an learning.[234]

It goes without saying that Quraish Shihab remains the central inspiration for all activities organized by PSQ. His fame and credibility are the main reasons that people are glad to donate their money to this institution. Charitable support becomes the main financial resource for it.[235] Fundraising is also made by maintaining cooperation with banks and other enterprises. For example in 2013, Bank Mandiri provided assistance of 1,035 billion Indonesian Rupiah (ca. 66,700 EUR) to improve the skills of religious preachers and educators in five eastern parts of Indonesia: Sumbawa, Palu, Kupang, Sorong, and Ternate. Bank Mandiri was interested in PSQ's mission in promoting moderation in religion that provides social stability, which meets the goal of Bank Mandiri to enhance and secure its business expansion in those

[232] These general topics are compiled in a booklet written by M. Quraish Shihab and Muchlis M. Hanafi.

[233] Cooperation has been made, for example, with the Technology University of Malaysia in the field of exegesis teaching, the Religious Rehabilitation Group of Singapore in the field of countering religious extremism, and *al-Rābiṭa al-Muḥammadiyya li al-ʿUlamāʾ* (Muhammadiyya Association of Scholars) of Morocco in the field of training and teaching.

[234] The visitors come to PSQ because they consider it as a role model institution in Qur'anic studies. A major purpose from study visits to PSQ is to get to know its programs and its resource management. Personal communication with Arif Chasanul Muna, a lecturer at State Islamic University of Pekalongan, Central Java, on July 24, 2013.

[235] Interview with Quraish Shihab on July 24, 2012, with Adjie Zayadi on February 19, 2014, and with Faried Saenong on February 21, 2014.

regions.[236] Garuda Indonesia is also ready to provide its flight service for some of the PSQ mobility. Overall, Shihab's relatives and colleagues – some of whom are successful businessmen – are more than ready to extend their support to PSQ when the institution is in need of financial support.[237]

Now PSQ is in a process of building a bigger complex that will include offices, teaching and meeting rooms, dormitories, a library, and a mosque in Pondok Cabe. As mentioned before, the *Bayt al-Qur'an* (BQ) complex is located in the middle of vacant land. A property developer plans to build residences and public spaces, including a mosque, on the land. After discussions with the local government of South Tangerang and PSQ, an agreement was achieved: the BQ complex and other assets, which are located in the middle of the vacant land, will be transferred to the front close to the main street and the management of the mosque will be entrusted to PSQ.[238] The groundbreaking for the mosque construction just started on December 10, 2014.[239] With its new facilities, PSQ aims to become a leading center for Qur'anic studies in Southeast Asia in the future.

## Islamic Moderation as a Common Platform

The PSQ programs deeply reflect the thoughts and the ideal of Quraish Shihab who declares himself as a strong advocate of religious moderation (*wasaṭiyya*). Shihab's normative argument primarily derives from the Qur'anic phrase *umma wasaṭ* (middle people)[240] that in his view gathers all kinds of goodness, because a middle position enables Muslims to act more objectively and more fairly. In the Muslim conception, Islam is believed to be a moderate religion because it stands between materialism and spiritualism, and between divinity and humanity (Shihab

[236] In 2010 Bank Mandiri also provided assistance of some 969 million Rupiahs (ca. 62,640 EUR) for the same goal. See: csr.bankmandiri.co.id/en/detail-pers-257-Bank Mandiri Provides Rp 1,035 billion for Religious Education and Koranic Studies.html Accessed on April 25, 2013.

[237] Husein and Ali Ibrahim Assegaf are among Shihab's important relatives who contribute greatly to providing financial support of the PSQ. The land on which the PSQ main building built was provided by Husein Assegaf, while the land on which the BQ building located was given by Ali Assegaf. The founding of the PSQ building was mostly financed by the family of Rosano Barrack, a businessman and Shihab's colleague. Conversation with Muchlis Hanafi on February 15 and December 31, 2014.

[238] Conversations with Adjie Zayadi on February 19, 2014, and Faried Saenong on February 21, 2014.

[239] The mosque construction was financed primarily by the family of Feisal Tanjung, former commander of the armed forces in Suharto's period (1993-1998). Conversation with Muchlis Hanafi on December 31, 2014.

[240] The Qur'anic prescription on Islamic moderation is Q. 2:143, "*And thus we have made you a middle community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you...*"

2011b:94, 2012b:I,415, 2014b:434).[241] On this basis, Shihab contends that moderation is an ideal character for Muslims to be witnesses and models for other people.

The term *wasaṭiyya,* in fact, reverberates in the modern age. Our discussion on this topic, therefore, needs to be put in the modern context where Muslims have to respond to the fast-changing era, putting them in a dilemmatic position between tradition and modernity, authenticity and change. Some groups of Muslims respond to the challenge of modernity by calling for radical changes and advocate for critical and contextual readings of religious tradition pursuing a new definition of religion that shows greater relevance with contemporary conditions. These groups are often called liberal or progressive Muslims, who make Islam their authoritative, but not necessarily exclusive, frame of reference. On the other hand, some others, often called scripturalist Muslims, are much more reactionary in their response. They tend to be purists with the absolutist and uncompromising nature of belief in the sense that they tend to be "intolerant of competing points of view and consider pluralist realities to be a form of contamination of the unadulterated truth" (Abou El Fadl 2005:18).[242] Both groups are often involved in tense disputes; one considers the other to be fanatical and narrow-minded literalists, or heretic and infidel the other way around. In this context, a moderate outlook is proposed to bridge the gap between these two contrasting views and considerably gains significance among wider segments of Muslim society.

It is by no means an easy task to define what moderation is, for there is basically no such specific entity called Islamic moderation, independent of time, space and context. Thus, it would be wrong to assume that moderation can be neatly placed in a discrete category and thus clearly demarcated from Islamic liberalism, on the one hand, and Islamic scripturalism, on the other hand. Some scripturalist and liberal ideas may have broad resonances among moderate Muslims, as well. Due to the

[241] In many Muslim exegetical works, be they classical or modern, the Qur'anic phrase *umma wasaṭ* is interpreted to designate the normative standing of Muslim religiosity against what has been called in Muslim conception the "excessive spirituality" of Christians in practicing religion, and the materialism and the offense of Jews toward the teachings of their religion. See for example, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, vol. III, p. 143 and *Tafsīr al-Manār*, vol. II, p. 4.

[242] I am indebted to Khaled Abou El-Fadl for his discussion on moderate and puritan tendencies in the modern Islamic world that helps me to frame modern phenomena of religiosity in the Muslim world and to answer why the rising voice for Islamic moderation is worth analysis in the modern context.

blurred boundaries, we need to consider these three categories as much as analytical tools to describe different tendencies of Islam rather than as exact descriptors.

It needs further studies to reconstruct when and where the term *wasaṭiyya* first appeared, but the term itself has become popular among al-Azhar scholars since the 1960s (Gräf 2009:214). Muḥammad Abū Zahra (1898-1974) defines the term as the ideal character of Islam (*al-mithāliyya*) that maintains balance between spirituality and materiality, between the demands of the body and those of the soul (Abū Zahra [1967] 1981:148, 160). Another Azhari scholar, Muḥammad al-Madanī (1907-1968), defines the term with an emphasis on the Islamic balance between spirituality and materiality, and the simplicity of Islamic faith and feasibility of Islamic obligations (Madanī [1961] 2013:18, 22). In other words, the term is used to describe the ideal character of Islam, a middle position between two opposing extremes.

Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī is probably the Azhari graduate who consistently popularizes the term *wasaṭiyya* and strives to systematize methods of interpreting religious texts under this term. Bettina Gräf observes that the meaning of *wasaṭiyya* in al-Qaraḍāwī's works evolves in a way that is contingent on the social and political context. In the 1970s, al-Qaraḍāwī used the term in the context of offering a political alternative between capitalism and socialism. He also used it to describe a middle position between excessiveness and disobedience, between the past and the present. In the 1980s, he used the term to reject both religious secularism and extremism, as well as to maintain a balance between fixedness and flexibility (*al-thawābit wa al-mutaghayyirāt*) in religion. In the 1990s, he employed the term to establish a certain position of Islam among other religions (Gräf 2009:219–22).

Methodologically, Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī features *wasaṭiyya* as an equilibrium between text and reason (*al-muwāzana baina al-naql wa al-ʿaql*). According to him, reason becomes a basis to decipher the meanings of the text according to eight methodological premises: a. belief in the authenticity of the Qur'anic text, b. working with sound reports, c. understanding the text regarding particular issues in the light of the general purposes of religion, d. belief in the absence of contradiction between the sound text and reason, e. belief in the order of the nature and causalities, f. understanding the Prophetic tradition in the light of the Qur'an, g. correlating the texts with one another, bringing back the ambiguities (*al-mutashābihāt*) to the

clarities (*al-muḥkamāt*), and the probable evidence (*al-ẓanniyyāt*) to the definite evidence (*al-qaṭʿiyyāt*), and h. the infallibility of Muslim community (Qaraḍāwī 2009:42–3). Characteristics of moderation as such are closely related to the enlightened reformist tradition that reaches back to the late 19th and 20th centuries and began to gain prominence within the Azhar circles in the second half of the 20th century.

Quraish Shihab's conception of *wasaṭiyya* must have derived from al-Azhar's discourse of it, for he frequently advocates *wasaṭiyya* under the banner of al-Azhar, especially in his capacity as the head of the Indonesian Branch of World Association for al-Azhar Graduates (WAAG). PSQ's campaign for Islamic moderation reverberates within the context of contestation between liberal and scripturalist Muslims that has become more intense in the post-Suharto era as religious discourses bearing scripturalist tendencies find momentum to step forward within a greater democratic atmosphere, confronting what their proponents perceive as secular values and liberal heretic thoughts of religion (see Chapter 4).[243] Scripturalist Muslims are often suspicious of the academic atmosphere at State Islamic Universities for they view that liberal religious thoughts find wide resonance among their academicians.[244] Within this situation, the founding fathers of PSQ who are also professors at UIN Jakarta came to an agreement to take some necessary actions to promote Islamic moderation that, in their view, constitutes the true character of Islamic teaching.

Moderation that is encouraged by PSQ can be seen in two aspects. First, it is moderation in religious thought, a middle position between two contrasting outlooks: between religious scripturalism and religious liberalism which are deemed to have neglected the normative guidance of the revealed texts (Hanafi 2013:vii–viii). Second, moderation is also understood as willingness to respect differences and pluralist realities, and readiness for open interaction and dialogue with others from different religious and cultural backgrounds (Shihab 2011b:94–7, 2014b:434). On many

[243] M. Syafi'i Anwar (2009) gives a good illustration about this contestation – between what he calls "progressive-liberal Islam" and "radical-conservative Islam– in the post-Suharto period. Both groups have their roots during Suharto's period. Liberal Muslims show greater concerns in intellectual discussions, while scripturalist Muslims show much concern in religious activism and propaganda. However, it was liberal Muslims to whom the New Order government paid much attention, for their religious perspectives to a high degree corroborated the government's policy to impose Pancasila as the sole basis (*asas tunggal*) and to maintain the doctrine of pluralism.

[244] See, for example, Hartono Ahmad Jaiz's (2005) *Ada Permurtadan di IAIN* (Apostasy at Indonesian State Islamic Universities).

occasions, Quraish Shihab emphasizes that moderation requires open mindedness to different interpretations of religion. He suggests that one not reject opinions from a different school (*madhhab*) based merely on fanaticism or loyalty to the doctrines of his own school. Rather, any interpretation of religion has to be examined based on the validity of its arguments. This notion of moderation reaches the extent that a Muslim scholar should also have a critical stance toward any intellectual legacy of the past generations, even toward the interpretations of the Prophet's companions who witnessed the revelation, because according to Shihab their interpretation could be fallacious or irrelevant to be adopted in a different context.[245] However, a critical reading in PSQ's discourse must not be understood as that in the academic sense of meaning. Apologetic and normative arguments are often employed when they come to discuss particular religious doctrines and figures.

Such notions of moderation can be seen in many of Quraish Shihab's works. His Sunni background does not restrain him to accommodate the opinions of some Shi'i Scholars such as Muḥammad Ḥusain Ṭabāṭabā'ī (1903-1981) and Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr (1935-1980). In the field of Islamic legal thought, he is ready to show an eclectic approach to the doctrines of various schools (see Chapter 2). More importantly, Shihab shows that commitment to moderation enables him to lavishly promote "Islamic ecumenism", reconciling different religious denominations under the banner of Islam. The spirit of ecumenism may be not outlandish for Shihab for it had been a central issue within al-Azhar in the 20th century, especially during Maḥmūd Shaltūt's office (Brunner 2004). His support to Islamic ecumenism is explicit, for instance, in his speech on February 15, 2014 during the International Conference on Qur'anic studies which was held to celebrate his 70th and PSQ's 10th birthdays in Jakarta; he recognized that he had strongly attempted to invite Saudi and Iranian speakers to sit together in the same forum presenting their perspectives regarding the topic of Qur'anic interpretation. His point was to introduce the public culture of

[245] In order to trace the moderation meant by PSQ, I had conversations with some who had participated in the program of Education for Young Exegetes (PKM) during October 2014. I choose PKM's participants as a basis of my analysis because they have been familiar with exegetical discourses and are trained to be professional exegetes. So, I view that they have more credentials in this case. Faiq Ihsan Anshori, for example, told me that Quraish Shihab always called the participants of PKM to interpret the Qur'anic text in way that avoided both excessive (*ghuluww*) and literalist (*ḥarfī*) tendencies. Personal communication with Faiq Ihsan Anshori on October 31, 2014. See also: http://psq.or.id/news/kuliah-pendidikan-kader-mufassir-bersama-prof-quraish-shihab/ accessed on October 8, 2014.

dialogue regardless of theological differences and to emphasize that a moderate position provides a constructive atmosphere to achieve this goal.[246]

However, moderation as adopted by PSQ gives us an impression that the institution is frequently involved in argumentation with scripturalist discourses of religion. This can be seen from PSQ's prospectus, which was published in 2009, that mentions that one of its programs is to offer counseling and to promote moderation to those convicted on terrorism charges (PSQ 2009:14). A book by Muchlis M. Hanafi, a member of the PSQ Expert Board, which was published by the Indonesian Association of al-Azhar Graduates and PSQ in 2013, highlights moderation greatly as a response to radical scripturalist thoughts of religion.[247]

Moderation as proposed by PSQ and Quraish Shihab rarely appears in direct confrontation and argumentation with liberal interpretation of religion. This might be explained by seeing that both share a common sense and a willingness to respect differences, as well as pluralist interpretations of religious texts. It is evident, for instance, in Shihab's preface to Taufik Adnan Kamal's *Rekonstruksi Sejarah al-Qur'an* (Reconstruction of a History of the Qur'an) in which Shihab criticizes that the author relies too greatly on works by orientalists on the subject without sufficiently making reference to works by Muslim scholars, and thereby, the book becomes controversial. Yet, he appreciates Kamal's contribution and suggests that any criticism on the book should be delivered through the production of intellectual works not through the expression of anger (Kamal 2005:vi).[248]

[246] In his speech Shaikh Saleh ibn Mohamed ibn Taleb, the Saudi speaker, emphasized that the Prophet and Muslim scholars of earlier generations had provided Muslims with 'clear' explanations of the Qur'an, while the Iranian speaker, Sayyed Mofid Hosseini Koushari, advocated for a rather rationalistic approach to the Qur'an. It has been widely known that Saudi Arabia and Iran have been, for a long time, involved in political and theological disputes, especially after the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979, that aggravate not only the relations between the two governments, but also between the people of these two nations. Analysis based on the speeches delivered on February 15, 2014 during the PSQ's conference of Qur'anic studies at State Islamic University of Jakarta.

[247] This book is a collection of Hanafi's papers which were presented on various occasions. The book is intended to function as a blueprint for moderate thought of religion. It puts moderation in response to radicalism and terrorism, as well as for a solution in realizing a peaceful life and maintaining tolerance toward pluralist realities.

[248] Kamal's book is a critical reading of the history of the Qur'an. He questions the validity of the ʿUthmānic codex of the Qur'an as the *textus receptus*. Consulting Islamic sources, as well as Western intellectual studies of the Qur'an, Kamal attempts to reconstruct a history of the Qur'an by accommodating opinions which are deemed by most Muslims as heretic. For further reading, see Kamal's (2005) *Rekonstruksi Sejarah al-Qur'an*.

Moreover, the first edition of PSQ's *Jurnal Studi al-Qur'an* (2006) contains an article by Nasaruddin Umar, a member of the PSQ Expert Board, on some notes regarding a controversial issue in Muslims' Qur'anic studies, i.e., the possibility of adopting Western theories of hermeneutics (*hermeneutika*) to the Qur'an. Umar recognizes the great contribution of *hermeneutika* as a method of interpretation to the ancient Western texts, particularly the Bible; it made those texts relevant to the contemporary life of humans. When it comes to Qur'an interpretation, however, Umar refuses the opinion that *hermeneutika* is the most reliable method. He shows confidence that Muslim methods of interpretation are still the most reliable in decoding the meanings of the Qur'an and drawing some significances of its teaching to the Muslim contemporary life. According to him, *hermeneutika* may function as a complement that can enrich the Muslim methodology of Qur'an interpretation (Umar 2006:54–5). In other words, it might be adopted after some adaptation to the Muslim method of Qur'an interpretation in order to serve the normative teachings of religion. Such response, though accompanied by a degree of reluctance, gives us an impression that PSQ's moderation is more ready for intellectual inclusiveness.

## The Idea of a School of Qur'anic Exegesis

At the outset of his discussion on institutions of learning in Islam, George Makdisi (1981:1) makes a distinction between two terms: schools and colleges of Islamic jurisprudence. The latter term is applied to the institutions or the buildings in which instruction took place. The former term designates one of two things: (1) those Muslim jurists who shared the experience of belonging to the same locality, and thus called "geographical schools"; or (2) those groups of scholars who were indicated as the followers of a leading jurist, and thus called "personal schools". In Islamic legal discourse, the notion of a "school" is most appropriately identified with an Arabic term *madhhab*.

In the field of Qur'anic exegesis, however, it is hard to find a good definition of school, not only because we lack a really good introduction into exegesis studies as yet, but also because the tradition of exegesis is relatively fluid; it was never rigidly debated and called for with identification to certain geographical or personal belongings such as theology and Islamic jurisprudence. The Muʿtazilī tradition of Qur'anic exegesis, for instance, has survived in some Sunni and Shīʿī exegetical works

despite the demise of *Muʿtazila* (Mourad 2010). The only time-honored categorization employed by Muslim scholars in this field is probably two major methodological implications to Qur'an exegesis, namely, the *tafsīr bi al-maʾthūr* (report-based exegesis) and the *tafsīr bi al-raʾy* (opinion-based exegesis), yet such a categorization appears to be problematic if we regard that most of the *tafsīr bi al-maʾthūr* is, in reality, the *tafsīr bi al-raʾy* (Saleh 2004:16) in which opinion determines what kinds of reports are included and how they are to be understood, particularly in the case of conflicting reports.

In Arab Muslim scholarship, Muḥammad Ḥusain al-Dhahabī (1995:77), for instance, uses the terms *madāris* to designate schools of exegesis. He mentions three important schools in the earlier periods of Islam: the schools of Mecca, Medina, and Iraq. What he means with the term "schools" here is those centers of *tafsīr* learning in which students learned Qur'an interpretation from their leading exegetes. In Mecca, al-Dhahabī mentions the school of ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās (d. 68/687), from whom a number of pupils such as Saʿīd ibn Jubair, Mujāhid, and Ikrīma learned the Qur'an. In Medina, such pupils as Abū al-ʿĀliya, Muḥammad ibn Kaʿb al-Qarẓī, Zaid ibn Aslam learned *tafsīr* from the city's prominent exegete, Ubay ibn Kaʿb (d. 28/649). In Iraq, pupils including ʿAlqama ibn Qais, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Qatāda learned *tafsīr* from ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd (d. 21/642). However, according to al-Dhahabī, different schools here do not necessarily imply that each school has its own different and independent methods in understanding the revealed text. Affiliation is made based on the frequent presence of pupils to a master. He mentions that Saʿīd ibn Jubair, for example, learned Qur'an interpretation from Ibn ʿAbbās, but he also learned it from Ibn Masʿūd; Abū al-ʿĀliya learned from Ubay ibn Kaʿb, as well as from ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Ibn ʿAbbās (Dhahabī 1995:78, 86). Nevertheless, such a conception of school still leaves a question as to the authenticity of the master's achievements. Ibn ʿAbbās, for example, is seen by Western scholars, particularly, as little more than a fabricated figure whose authoritative status, for the most part, has been presumed to be fiction (Berg 2011; Nöldeke and Schwally 1919:II, 166).

Meanwhile, Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921) used the term *Richtungen*[249] to describe tendencies and modes of Muslim Qur'an exegesis: report-based, ratio-based, mystical, sectarian, and modernist modes of Qur'anic interpretation. However, Goldziher's classification of exegesis into neat boxes is seen as irrelevant, for such a categorization imposes upon exegesis a more rigid character than the exegesis tradition itself allows (Saleh 2004:17). Moreover, his categorization is based on his analysis of the chronological developments of *tafsīr* in its broadest definition, the act of interpretation, and therefore ignored looking at exegesis as a genre of texts dedicated to certain methods of interpretation (Bauer 2013:4). Thus, it would become problematic to take the categorization for granted in the sense that certain schools or modes of interpretation have become exclusively unique for a particular setting of history, and thereby, are hardly possible to develop in another setting.

In a more recent usage, the term school is employed by Walid Saleh (2003) to make distinctions between the German School, which maintains that the Qur'an reflects the career of the Prophet Muhammad and was codified at an early date by Caliph ʿUthmān, and Wansbrough's School, which presupposes that the Qur'an does not reflect the Prophet's career and that it was composed much later. By this term, Saleh puts emphasis on a frame of thought in the study of the Qur'an. The term school is also used to indicate the Egyptian School of literary exegesis as proposed by Ṭāhā Ḥusain (1889-1973), Amīn al-Khūlī (1895-1966), Muḥammad Aḥmad Khalafallāh (1916-1991) and Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (1943-2010; Wright 2008). It is likely that the usage of the term school leads to an understanding of a genre by means of which a scholar dedicates his work toward a certain method and purpose of interpretation.

With regard to our discussion of PSQ, the notion of school of Qur'anic exegesis is twofold: an orientation in Qur'an interpretation and an educational institution of future exegetes. The first aspect, as represented by Quraish Shihab's approach to the revealed texts, is deeply rooted in ʿAbduh's guidance-oriented *tafsīr* in which *maṣlaḥa* constitutes an operative principle to draw the significance of the Qur'anic messages in the changing era (see Chapter 1 and 2). This orientation then takes a shape of an institution as a means to deploy the idea to new functionaries who are expected to

[249] Ignaz Goldziher's book *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranasulegung* is translated into English by Wolfgang H. Behn as *Schools of Koranic Commentators*, and into Arabic by ʿAlī Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Qadīr as *Madhāhib al-Islāmiyya fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān.*

provide society with relevant and meaningful articulations of religion.[250] In the modern context where scientific developments and differences are highly valued, PSQ attempts to depict Islam through exegetical endeavors as a moderate religion that does not oppose, but accommodates, social and intellectual progress.

There are at least three programs of PSQ that are designed to introduce knowledge on Qur'an interpretation: Education for Young Exegetes (PKM), Education for Memorizers of the Qur'an (*Pasca Tahfidz*), and Training of Trainers, yet it is PKM that constitutes a coherent program to build a school of Qur'anic exegesis by considering at least three reasons. First, the participants recruited are those educated persons who enjoy post-graduate studies in the field of Qur'anic studies. Second, the participants are required to attend class regularly, to present their research paper, and to be actively involved in the discussions. And third, the lecturers determine a list of books for reading material in the class. The learning atmosphere of PKM is closer to that learning at a university rather than one-directional instruction as in most traditional religious learning environments.

Due to the relatively short period of the program, the strategy of instruction puts emphasis on the principles of interpretation (*kaidah tafsir*). Such principles are intended to provide the participants with knowledge on the foundations and models of interpretation that are quite useful for practical examinations in interpreting the Qur'anic text.[251] The best example is probably *Qawāʿid al-Tafsīr* by Khālid ibn ʿUthmān al-Sabt that introduces a number of standard principles which are followed by explanations and some exegetical examples.[252] The book – as its author acknowledges – is a collection and reformulation of principles and precepts that are derived from various books on the sciences of the Qur'an, Islamic legal principles, the Arabic language, and other related fields (Sabt 2001:2). This implies that the book alone may not introduce new insights in Qur'anic interpretation. The book contains basic

[250] Making the Qur'an central to Muslim life is Shihab's main purpose in his career. In his view, the centrality of the Qur'an would become meaningful if there are attempts from Muslim exegetes from any generation to bridge the gap between the Qur'an and reality. Shihab's argument can be found in his article *Tafsir dan Modernisasi* (Qur'an Interpretation and Modernization) which is then included in his *Membumikan al-Qur'an* (Shihab 2013b:139–51).

[251] Interview with Muchlis Hanafi on July 23, 2012 in Ciputat. In *Membumikan al-Qur'an*, Shihab views that the most appropriate teaching method of Qur'anic exegesis at universities is through learning foundational principles and models of interpretation that can be generated to the rest of the Qur'anic text. He deems this method as the most practical and less-time consuming (Shihab 2013b:280–06).

[252] The book is proposed by Muchlis Hanafi who deems it suitable to meet the teaching strategy of PSQ. Personal communication with Muchlis Hanafi on October 20, 2014.

principles, exemplars, and models of interpretation that can be extended to interpret the rest of the Qur'anic verses. Thus, learning such principles is deemed more practical and less-time consuming than reading interpretations of the entirety of Qur'anic verses. These principles are a shorthand way for extensive discussions on the Qur'an in general, its linguistic peculiarities and methods of legal interpretation.

To have a better illustration about the *Qawāʿid*, we need to highlight some instances that represent the above major topics. Regarding the question on the causes of Qur'anic revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), a precept says "*the knowledge on the causes [of revelation] is confined only from transmission and hearing*".[253] This means that only transmitted reports whose chains of narrators reach the Prophet (*marfūʿ*) are recognized as the legitimate sources for Muslim knowledge about the causes of revelation. Accordingly, this becomes the only domain of the Prophet's companions who witnessed the revelation. As such, reason has no authority at all to tell anything about the causes of revelation (Sabt 2001:54).[254] In some cases, there might be a number of reports that provide various kinds of information about the cause of the revelation of particular verses. In this case, the investigation then follows a precept "*when reports on the cause of revelation vary, [the investigation] is assessed based on the report's evidential quality, so it follows only the sound report; and then on the wording, so it follows the clear one. When the period [of the reports] is adjacent, then they are taken altogether; and when it is distant, [the matter] is determined either by [conforming] repetition in revelation or making preference*" (Sabt 2001:69).[255] This precept tells us about a method of investigation to different reports on a cause of revelation. Investigation is first carried out to reveal the sound reports and then the clear reports among the sound reports. When the sound and clear reports refer to different realities, one has to examine the period in which those realities occurred. When they occurred in adjacent periods, the Qur'anic text must have addressed those realities altogether and when they occurred in distant periods, there might be

[253] *al-qaul fī ʻl-asbāb mauqufun ʿalā ʻl-naql wa ʻl-simāʿ*

[254] Some may use the term the "occasions" of revelation to translate the Arabic term *asbāb al-nuzūl.* I rather use the term "causes" because in the Islamic exegetical discourse the term *asbāb* gives a strong impression that particular events definitely caused the Qur'anic text to reveal. That is why reference to sound transmitted reports is required in the Islamic exegetical tradition.

[255] *idhā taʿaddadat al-marwiyyāt fī sababi ʻl-nuzūl, nuẓira ilā ʻl-thubūt, faqtuṣira ʿalā ʻl-ṣaḥīh, thumma ʻl-ʿibāra, faqtuṣira ʿalā ʻl-ṣarīḥ. Fa-in taqāraba ʻl-zamān ḥumila ʿalā ʻl-jamīʿ, wa-in tabāʿada ḥukima bi tikrāri ʻl-nuzūl au al-tarjīḥ*

repetition of revelation or investigation that can be carried out by taking the most reliable report.

Regarding the method of legal interpretation, some precepts are formulated as a guideline to identify *naskh* (abrogation) in the Qur'anic text. One of them is a precept, "*abrogation is not determined with possibility*".[256] In the *Qawāʿid*, *naskh* is defined as a rather generic term that covers processes of specifying the generality, restricting the unrestricted, explaining the abstract, and annulling former legal provisions. Thus, *naskh* bears a meaning of restriction and annulment of legal provisions either partly or wholly. Based on this precept, abrogation is only to be determined by clear evidence, either through the Qur'an itself or sound transmitted reports, by Muslim consensus, or through a historical investigation on 'conflicting' revealed texts (Sabt 2001:728). Another precept, "*abrogating part of the ruling or a condition of it does not mean abrogating the ruling totally*" (Sabt 2001:739),[257] suggests that partial abrogation of a ruling may exist, but that it does not lead to the annulment of the ruling itself.

Regarding the linguistic styles of the Qur'an that are frequently linked to the theological doctrine about the miraculous nature of the Qur'an, some precepts are introduced, such as "*it is required as much as possible not to consider the words of the Qur'an synonymous*" (Sabt 2001:467).[258] The explanation is that synonyms do exist between the Qur'anic words, but it only happens at the level of basic meaning. Each word has its own particular meaning within the construction of the Qur'anic text. For example, in Q. 3:146 *wahn*, *ḍaʿf* and *istikāna* share the same basic meaning, weakness, but each contains its own particular meaning. *Wahn* puts emphasis on a meaning of acting like the weak, while *ḍaʿf* is the absence of power, and *istikāna* is showing weakness (Sabt 2001:467). Another precept suggests that "*the meaning resulting from a collection of two synonymous words does not exist in one of them in separation*".[259] According to al-Sabt, this precept is to eliminate any assumption of repetition and redundancy in the Qur'an when two synonymous words are mentioned, because putting them together results in an added meaning (Sabt 2001:470).

[256] *al-naskh lā yathbutu maʿa 'l-iḥtimāl*
[257] *naskhu juz'i'l-ḥukmi au sharṭihi lā yakūnu naskhan li-aṣlihi*
[258] *mahmā amkana ḥamlu alfāẓi 'l-Qur'ān ʿalā ʿadami 'l-tarāduf*
[259] *al-maʿnā al-ḥāṣil min majmūʿi 'l-mutarādifain lā yūjad ʿinda infirādihimā*

Considering such principles beneficial to the learning process of Qur'an interpretation, Quraish Shihab himself deliberately wrote a book on this subject entitled *Kaidah Tafsir* (Principles of Interpretation, 2013). The book is mainly his reformulation of methods of interpretation by Muslim scholars. Believing that particular linguistic styles of the Qur'an generate a particular meaning or message, Shihab shows much interest in discussing linguistic and grammatical details of the Qur'an. For example, he highlights two synonymous words: *faʿala* and *kasaba* that both share the basic meaning of "to do". Though synonymous, Shihab views that both have different semantic meanings in the Qur'anic text. *Faʿala* is used to designate an action with negative effects. When attributed to man, it indicates a meaning of bad deeds. When attributed to God, it bears a meaning of threat, punishment or marvelous action by God. On the other hand, *kasaba* is attributed only to man. It means man's deed that requires his responsibility in the hereafter (Shihab 2013a:126–27).

His contribution in this field is probably evident in his critical reading of some tools of the Muslim exegetical tradition and his response to a contemporary question regarding the possible adoption of Western theories of hermeneutics. He disagrees with the definition of abrogation (*naskh*) as "annulment"; *naskh* is not annulling the ruling of some Qur'anic verses with other verses that were revealed subsequently. Rather, he espouses the definition of *naskh* as a "replacement" of a religious ruling with another due to the changing realities and contexts experienced by Muslims (Shihab 2013a:293–94). With "replacement" linked to different realities, he proposes a dynamic implementation of religion. As such, there is no single Qur'anic verse that stops functioning because of being abrogated. Rather, all Qur'anic verses function within their own given contexts.

Moreover, he is also critical of the traditional criteria of exegetes as set out by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) which, according to him, needs to be rearticulated or revised in ways that are relevant and conducive for creating an atmosphere for the emergence of new exegetes. He views that the requirement that to be an exegete, one has to confess the right belief in order to obtain divine guidance is irrelevant, because it will disregard any interpretation of the Qur'an that comes from non-Muslims. He proposes that requirement of belief can be replaced with that of objectivity and liability (Shihab 2013a:397). Shihab shows his open mindedness with regard to approaches of the Qur'an derived outside the Muslim intellectual tradition. He views

that some aspects of Western hermeneutics might be valuable to enrich discussions upon the meanings of the Qur'an (Shihab 2013a:427).

In general, what we can say about this school is its great emphasis on linguistic details of the Qur'anic text and its reliance on referring to sound transmitted reports to determine some 'dogmatic' instruments in Qur'anic interpretation such as the causes of revelation and *naskh*. It still shows little interest in history that might be beneficial to endeavors of contextual reading of the Qur'anic text; our observation on the subjects and references taught in PSQ's programs confirms this.

## A Qur'an-based Intellectual Movement

PSQ, which situates its programs within the framework of making the Qur'an the predominant foundation to rearticulate Islamic moderation in a modern time, mobilizes its intellectual resources to expand its religious and intellectual mission. It forms a partnership and cooperation with a number of educational institutions, as well as mass media.[260] A sense of collective effort advocated by PSQ to pursue intellectual programs or projects of thought gives us an impression about another side of PSQ as a cultural and intellectual movement which bases its activities and work on endeavors of exploring the teachings of the revealed texts.

Intellectual movements as defined by Scott Frickel and Neil Gross (2005:206) in their attempt to introduce a general theory of Scientific-Intellectual Movements (SIMs), are "collective efforts to pursue research programs or projects for thought in the face of resistance from others in the scientific or intellectual community". The definition is a shorthand description of some assumptions. First, an SIM has a more or less coherent program for intellectual advance or change. Second, a movement is called an SIM in this definition if at the time of its emergence, it challenges significantly prevailing ways of approaching some problems or issues, and thus encounters resistance. Third, an SIM is inherently political in the sense that its intellectual contribution may have the effect of altering distributions of power or recognition in society. Forth, an SIM is constituted through organized collective action. Fifth, an SIM is an episodic phenomenon which means that it exists as a

[260] Among the national media that become PSQ's partners are Metro TV, SCTV, Kompas TV, Radio Brava, Radio Cosmopolitan, and Radio Elshinta.

historical entity for finite periods. And sixth, SIMs can vary in intellectual aim and scope (Frickel and Gross 2005:206–08).

With regard to the dynamics of the emergence of an intellectual movement, Frickel and Gross come to outline four propositions. First, an SIM is more likely to emerge when high-status intellectual actors show dissatisfaction with or grievance to what they understand to be the dominant intellectual tendencies of the day. This happens when they view that something has been going wrong or incomplete in terms of the way problems are approached. Second, an SIM is more likely to be successful "when structural conditions provide access to key resources." A fundamental resource is financial support that constitutes a critical component of knowledge production and provides opportunities of employment for the participants of the intellectual movement. Another resource is intellectual prestige which is additional to what the participants currently possess. Another is an organizational resource that enables the participants of an intellectual movement to mobilize and engage in collective action. Third, an SIM is more likely to be successful if it has greater access to what is, in the literature of social movements, called "micromobilization contexts"; various types of intellectual events that offer space for the incubation of ideas and findings. And forth, the success of an SIM is contingent upon the work done by the participants to frame the movement ideas in a way that resonates with the concerns of those who are currently active in intellectual fields (Frickel and Gross 2005:209–21).

Frickel and Gross develop their theory of scientific-intellectual movements from their reading of theories on social movements. What makes both different is that intellectual movements direct their activities by proposing knowledge-based projects. Herbert Blumer distinguished four phases in the lifecycle of social movements. The first is "social ferment" which is characterized by unorganized, widespread discontent. The second is "popular excitement" where discontent becomes more clearly defined and more collectively expressed. The third is "formalization", which is marked with the creation of a formal organization. And the forth is "institutionalization" where the movement becomes an organic part of the society and crystalizes into a professional structure (Della Porta and Diani 2006:150). Given that social movements are episodic phenomena, some sociologists call the last phase as the phase of "decline" which does not necessarily mean failure. Frederick D. Miller

(1999:304) mentions four models to depict the decline of social movements: repression, cooptation, success, and failure.

I wish to appropriate some aspects of the above theories to read PSQ's intellectual role and position. We might categorize PSQ as an intellectual movement, or more precisely, a Qur'an-based intellectual movement if we look at the fact that its emergence was primarily motivated by discontent from a high-ranking Muslim scholar, Quraish Shihab who is today the most prolific Indonesian exegete. Discontent was expressed to respond the popular use of the Muslim Holy Book among Indonesian Muslims who tend to treat the Qur'an as a mere source of religious salvation and rituality and suffice themselves with the interpretations of the past Muslim generations upon its meanings. Qur'anic interpretation is seen as a relic of the past that will always be relevant to every generation and context. Thus, PSQ contributes to an intellectual advance in the parts of the Indonesian Muslim society where education toward understanding and rearticulating the meanings of the Qur'an does not find proper attention.[261]

Besides, it was also an expression of grievance to a recent development in the higher Islamic academic field where critical approaches to religious texts arise to become a dominant research program. Such approaches are seen to have produced what is, from the perspective of the *'ulamā',* called 'liberal' thoughts that often raise controversies and compete with normative interpretations of religion.[262] It is also a response to the growing interest in multidisciplinary approaches to Islamic studies at Islamic universities, particularly the State Islamic University of Jakarta where Shihab was based and became a professor of Qur'anic exegesis. Shihab captures an implication that this new research orientation would rather produce researchers in Qur'anic studies and show lesser contributions to the education of students with the qualifications of being Qur'an exegetes.[263] What Shihab means with exegetes here are

[261] M. Quraish Shihab concedes that his motivation to establish PSQ was his concern after witnessing children in the mosque of Fathullah in Ciputat memorize the Qur'an but without a proper understanding about its meaning. Interview with Quraish Shihab on July 24, 2012 in Ciputat.

[262] In his modest statement, Shihab concedes that one of the motivations of the PSQ foundation is to take part in public discussions of religion and to propose 'balancing' opinions to some liberal discourses of religion at Indonesian Islamic universities. Interview with Quraish Shihab on July 24, 2012 in Ciputat.

[263] Quraish Shihab expressed his dissatisfaction with the new academic stream in Qur'anic studies at the State Islamic University of Jakarta on a number of occasions. Once he said this during a session of the PKM program. Faried Saenong, a member of the Expert Board, also hints at the same reason.

those scholars of the Qur'an who are prepared to take on the task of articulating Qur'anic messages and to contribute to articulating the normative basis of Islamic teachings.

This intellectual discontent was then followed up by attempts to consolidate possible resources for collective action. This is evident with attempts of organizing small discussions and workshops, as well as building networks and mutual understanding about what should be done for the sake of creating a distinct research project that took place before 2004. Nasaruddin Umar was the key figure during Quraish Shihab's assignment in Cairo. After Shihab's return from his diplomatic mission in 2002, the vision toward making collective action became more plausible. His fame and career experience in intellectual, cultural, and governmental fields have equipped him with extensive networks that were ready to provide the necessary resources for the success of the movement. At this stage, preliminary intellectual and financial resources were already at stake to move on the next phase.

The formalization phase is marked by the official announcement of the main building of PSQ on September 18, 2004 by the Minister of Religious Affairs, Said Agil Husin al-Munawar. To achieve its goal, PSQ arranged more or less coherent programs to pursue intellectual advances and balance in the field of Qur'anic studies. As mentioned above, PSQ's programs mainly focus on courses and trainings through which transformations of thoughts and dissemination of research programs of the Qur'an are taking place. PSQ is formed – as Shihab concedes in a humble way – as an alternative and 'complementary' institution of Qur'anic studies and does not intend to rival or replace the role played by institutions of higher Islamic education available in the country.[264] It does not award its participants with any academic degree or certificate of degree. Yet, its success and good reception within Indonesian society – if this can happen – might alter or influence policy in Islamic higher education, or the way some elements of Muslim society in Indonesia approach the Qur'anic text. It is not impossible because PSQ's members of the Expert Board are those active lecturers in Indonesian Islamic universities – despite their current peripheral role in research projects of higher education – and in the future its alumni participants may become

Conversation with two participants of the PKM, Alivermana Wiguna and Mauidlotun Nisa, on February 20, 2014 in Ciputat, and with Faried Saenong on February 21, 2014 in Jakarta.

[264] Interview with Quraish Shihab on July 24, 2012 in Ciputat.

influential figures within their society and professional circles. This is the political aspect of PSQ in the Weberian sense.[265]

PSQ sets its mission to consistently promote what it perceives as moderate and civilized Islam. The institution becomes a place for incubation and formulation of its key ideas which involves the members of the Expert Board before they are coordinated and collectively disseminated through its programs that target different segments of Muslim society, from school and university students, preachers, memorizers of the Qur'an, and to the general public. In order to support this agenda, PSQ attempts, as much as possible, to obtain access to key resources. It maintains its financial resources from charitable contributions that are mainly related to Shihab's networks, as well as from cooperation with some commercial enterprises. PSQ needs to secure its financial support in order to not only boost its knowledge production, but also to provide employment for its participants. It needs money to hire its office and library staff, as well as to finance its programs. As mentioned before, PSQ never asks its participants to pay some amount of money to get involved in its programs. Instead, it offers them allowances, facilities and accommodations. This facility might constitute a sort of attraction to the potential recruits along with the fame and the credentials of Quraish Shihab.

As mentioned previously, the intellectual resources of PSQ are those members of the Expert Board and their extensive intellectual networks who are responsible in formulating and implementing PSQ's intellectual programs. They are mostly doctors and professors in Qur'anic exegesis and, more importantly, share the same agenda with PSQ.[266] Of course, they are the proponents of the normative approach to religious texts who have been familiar with the *ʿulamā*-tic milieu. Since defenders of the normative approach play a peripheral role in research projects in today's Islamic higher education, the opportunity to join PSQ offers them with sort of added value in their intellectual career. PSQ offers them a "new stage" for intellectual prestige by

[265] Every intellectual program that proposes changes shows a willingness to alter the configuration of social positions in which "power, attention and other scarce resources are unequally distributed." The political aspect of intellectual movements is shown in interests in the distribution, maintenance or transfer of power, because some of the participants may aim to amass prestige and influence by their intellectual merit (Frickel and Gross 2005:207).

[266] PSQ explicitly does not determine the qualifications of the members of its Expert Board, but it is likely that those professors and doctors of Qur'anic exegesis and other related disciplines are qualified as far as they share the same vision. Conversation with a member of the Expert Board, A. Wahib Mu'thi, on February 21, 2014 in Ciputat, and interview with Edi Junaedi on October 29, 2014.

inviting them to the membership of the Expert Board. This membership provides them with a greater opportunity to advance their intellectual role and capacity, both through teaching and mentoring programs, as well as production of religious knowledge.[267]

Just like social movements, in order to be successful, an intellectual movement needs to recruit new members.[268] To exert greater influence, PSQ actively manages to recruit new participants for its programs. "Micromobilization contexts", in which representatives of the movement and those potential recruits can come into sustained contact with one another (Frickel and Gross 2005:219) are set up for not only maintaining effective knowledge transmission, but also for strengthening potential networking. This can be seen from PSQ's courses and some other occasional events like trainings, workshops, and conferences. Moreover, PSQ also facilitates its alumni with a forum, namely the Indonesian Society of the Qur'an (*Masyarakat al-Qur'an Indonesia*), as a means of communication among them, as well as discussions and publications, and occasionally invites them to its seminars and discussion forums in order to maintain potential networking with them for the success of its cultural and intellectual projects.

## Conclusion

The emergence of Center for Qur'anic Studies (PSQ) sends a message that understanding Islam should be done through understanding the meanings of its foundational text and drawing its significance in different contexts of history. In doing so, it sets coherent programs and defines strategies for amassing its ideas and research projects, particularly through the education of new generations of Muslim exegetes who will take on the task of articulating religious teachings in the future. Systematic trainings on methods and principles of Qur'anic interpretation as organized by PSQ leads us to an idea about the emergence of a school of exegesis that consistently promotes what it calls moderate interpretation of religion as an Islamic

[267] Faried Saenong told me that one of Shihab's goals to invite those scholars to the Expert Board is to encourage them to produce intellectual works. PSQ is ready to lend its facilities and other kinds of support. Interview with Faried Saenong on February 21, 2014.

[268] What distinguishes an intellectual movement from a social one is that the former focuses on knowledge-based projects, moreover, it is likely to remain smaller and might not reverberate much in the lives of most people (Frickel and Gross 2005:225).

normative disposition in response to intense competitions between the so-called liberal and scriptural understandings of the religious texts.

PSQ is a collaborative action that emerges from an expression of grievance harbored by a high-ranking religious intellectual to respond to the popular ways the Qur'an is approached within Indonesian Muslim society and at Indonesian Islamic universities. From this perspective, PSQ can be seen as a Qur'an-based intellectual movement. Given that an intellectual movement is an episodic phenomenon, it is unlikely that PSQ has reached the decline stage which is, according to Frederick Miller (1999:304–08), marked by repression, cooptation, success or failure. Repression occurs when agents of power use their force to prevent the movement from functioning or to prevent people from joining it. We cannot imagine such repression to a movement with a moderate religious outlook in a democratic society. Cooptation occurs when influential individuals in the movement are offered rewards that make them ignore the collective goals of the movement. Some might be suspicious about the background of some of its leading figures who work at state institutions. Yet, cooptation is difficult to imagine because we have not found changes in terms of PSQ's collective orientation since its emergence. Success can only be imagined if the movement has achieved its goal, and then reorients toward new goals. And failure, as well, cannot be imagined because what PSQ has currently achieved does not show a sign of failure. The current situation of PSQ might be best described as what Herbert Blumer calls the "formalization" phase, in which it attempts to stabilize its pattern of intellectual programs and to gain some importance among the circle of Indonesian religious academia.

# Concluding Remarks

The wave of Islamic reformism that reached the Indonesian archipelago in the early 20th century is predominantly marked with the appeal toward direct exercising of the Islamic foundational texts. As a result, there was a growing interest in Qur'anic exegesis and the Prophetic tradition, particularly among reform-minded scholars. However, this appeal was considerably oriented toward the purification of religion from any perceived contaminated practices of religion. Voices toward a new articulation of Islamic doctrines re-actualized in Indonesia's post-colonial period, especially during the New Order government when the political situation was not in favor of Islamic political activism, but hugely favorable for Islamic intellectualism. Indonesian Muslim intellectuals began to carry out the task of repositioning and reconciling religion with the new identity of being Muslims in the new context of the nation-state in various ways.

Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy (1904-1975), who wrote a number of works on the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition, made his works on the reveled texts integral steps toward a reformulation of Islamic law. His important contribution to the development of Indonesian Islam is probably his attempt toward creating an Indonesian – national – *fiqh*, which includes considerations of local cultures and practices (Feener 2007:66). Ash-Shiddieqy's arguments in favor of the creation of an Indonesian *fiqh* are based on his contention that certain elements of Arab and Middle Eastern culture had established themselves in many classical theories of jurisprudence. Accordingly, what has been considered as Islamic law should be actually seen as an "Arab *fiqh*" (Feener 2007:68). Meanwhile, Hamka (1908-1981), who experienced imprisonment during Sukarno's communist-backed government, employed Qur'anic exegesis to respond to religious, social and political situations of his time. One of the most important aspects that he emphasized in his exegetical work is the ideal that Islam should play a central role in the country and his criticism on 'secular' nationalism that according to him had belittled Islam and Muslim contribution to the foundation of the Indonesian state (Federspiel 1994:64).

To respond to the contemporary questions, Quraish Shihab popularizes a jargon of "making the Qur'an down-to-earth" (*membumikan al-Qur'an*) as an attempt to re-center the position of the Qur'an as the chief inspirational guidance for addressing the current exigencies of the (Indonesian) Muslim society. In line with Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ʿAbduh, he emphasizes the idea of Islam so much as a civilization that corresponds to the modern needs rather than merely as a religion per se (Hourani 1962; Laffan 2003:120–22). He not only contributes to introducing new articulations of religion, which are eclectic in nature, through his exegetical and *fatāwā*-modeled works, but also to devising principles and methods for the sake of proper and relevant understanding of the revealed texts. First of all, he asserts the notion of privileging the Qur'anic text over other Islamic religious texts. Believing in the Qur'an as the primary provider of divine guidance, Shihab is convinced that it contains general principles, values and long-range objectives that can be extended to various contexts of human history. In line with the enlightened reformists, Shihab makes a classification between the purely religious affairs, which mainly contain belief and observances, and the worldly social ones. The former has to be literally subjected to the dictate of the revealed texts, whereas the latter is assessed through the principles and objectives derived from the texts. Because the worldly affairs are constantly dynamic, Shihab argues that they ought to be approached through analogy that is exclusively based on the consideration of human interests (*al-maṣāliḥ al-mursala*).

Quraish Shihab appears among those who contend that religion or *sharīʿa* is introduced to protect the interests of human beings. When modernity for Muslim society marks a sharp break with the tradition of the past, a legal principle of *maṣlaḥa* is recast and increasingly adopted by reform-minded Muslim scholars as a principle of adaptability. In his *fatāwā*, Shihab appears to adopt considerably the principles of *maṣlaḥa* and *taisīr* (lenience) to respond to the demands of Muslim society between living with the reality and, at the same time, being faithful to their religion. In what follows, he also devises the legality of *takhayyur* (selecting one among various opinions in one school or different schools) as a source of mercy for the Muslim community. Such legal thoughts have been widely adopted particularly within the "new scholasticism", which in modern times can be rooted from the teachings of Muḥammad ʿAbduh.

The enlightened reformist scholars of the new scholasticism are most likely not interested in devising religion for a political movement per se than for civilizational projects. Living in an era of nation-state, Quraish Shihab is confronted with the question of Muslim political devotion. Holding the notion of differentiation between religious and worldly affairs, Shihab argues that this new modern political sovereignty is much more pertinent to human affairs rather than to religious doctrinal matter, while at the same time, there is no clear injunction from the revealed texts regarding this issue. Therefore, he is convinced whatever political system is adopted by the Muslim community is legitimate as long as they do not contradict the general principles imposed by religion. In his view, human ruling in the world from the perspective of religion, which affirms God's sovereignty over the universe, is a form of "delegated sovereignty" whose mechanism is subject to divine "natural" laws. In his view, Muslim affiliation and devotion to different states that become common in modern times does not undermine the notion of Muslims as one community (*umma*), because the very notion of *umma* lies in Muslim unity in religion.

Quraish Shihab's positive response to the Indonesian state ideology of Pancasila (the Five Pillars) is a clear example in which he attempts to reconcile religion with the idea of the Indonesian nation-state. Convinced that none of Pancasila's pillars – which consist of monotheism, humanism, national unity, democracy and social justice – in principle, contradict the Islamic teachings, he argues about the compatibility of Pancasila as the national common good with Islam. For him, Pancasila will always remain compatible with religion as long as the state recognizes the freedom of citizens to implement their own religion without any interference from the state itself, or other individuals or groups (Shihab 1994:85).

Such a position appears to be highly pragmatic from the perspective of the Islamists who firmly aspire to the 'Islamization' of the state and establishing their proposed Islamic order thereof. Such an assessment does make sense because a reference to the thought of the new scholasticism enables Muslims to present Islam as a dynamic entity. The new scholasticism devises methods and principles that acknowledge a greater freedom of implementation of Islam in various contexts as long as it goes in line with the general principles of religion. Quraish Shihab often links these general principles with the Qur'anic concept *al-khair* (universal virtue) and the manifestation of Islam in various contexts with *al-maʿrūf* (applied virtue).

Moreover, Shihab himself is not interested in practical politics and does not aim at devising Islam as a political ideology. His main concern is obviously for Islam to function as a basis of moral guidance and civilization.

The rapid expansion of information technologies that is enhanced by the growing democratic atmosphere in the post-Suharto period has created spaces for new actors, who have tenuous links with the *'ulamā*-tic tradition of learning, to speak for Islam. The creation of new spaces has led to the migration of people and religious public discourses which eventually contribute to the destabilization of the *'ulamā*'s religious authority. In other words, religious authority becomes increasingly contested among various contenders. In the midst of the hurly burly of contestation over public consent, Quraish Shihab finds a little space to exercise his public role in the new capitalized public sphere created by television, where discourses of religion are frequently hosted by market-made and popular preachers. Hosting cool-headed programs of religious virtues, he attempts to attract the public attention through exercising a sort of "persuasive authority", the ability to direct the belief and conduct of the public based on trust (Abou El Fadl 2006:18). Shihab was already a renowned and respected scholar before he became widely known on television. His educational background at al-Azhar definitely lends him the intellectual authority in the religious field.

It should be noted that discourse structures both a sense of reality and the notion of identity for people (Mills 2004:13). It not only reflects or represents social entities and relations, but also constructs and constitutes them (Latif 2008:84). Along with this reason, the dominant discourse of religious piety through national electronic media can be understood as a reflection and representation of the realities within and the interests of the majority of the Indonesian Muslim society. In this situation, Quraish Shihab attempts to penetrate the new public sphere, striving to promote a counter or alternative discourse of Qur'an-based religious civility and intellectualism which is expected to give significant contributions to and influences on the construction of religious understandings among the Indonesian Muslims.

Quraish Shihab seems to realize that his Qur'anic project will become more meaningful if it is put into a collective and collaborative action. The foundation of the Center for Qur'anic Studies (*Pusat Studi al-Qur'an, PSQ*) in 2004 can be seen as an

attempt to serve this objective under the banner of "making the Qur'an down-to-earth in a pluralistic society". The institution sets coherent programs and defines strategies for disseminating ideas and research projects. It involves professors of Qur'anic exegesis to participate in its programs. It also offers systematic training on methods and principles of Qur'anic interpretation mainly for those post-graduate students who are expected to be future exegetes and therefore take on the task of articulating religious teachings in the future. The foundation of PSQ as a private and independent institution apparently enhances the authority of Quraish Shihab as a reputed religious scholar for the institution becomes increasingly attached to him. All in all, this institution embodies the emergence of a school of Qur'anic exegesis in contemporary Indonesia. The ability to transplant exegetical projects in the form of an institution that is expected to produce new exegetes becomes a unique achievement of Shihab that distinguishes him from other Indonesian exegetes.

Making the Qur'an his center of discourse, Shihab strives to situate this school of exegesis to operate on the basis of what he calls *wasaṭiyyat al-Islām* (Islamic moderation). It is a conceptualized attitude to describe both faithfulness with the normative boundaries of religion and open-mindedness toward innovation and progress in the modern age. It is contextually a response to religious liberalism and secularism, on the one hand, and to religious scripturalism and puritanism, on the other. The former is seen as lacking in commitment to the normative basis of religion, whereas the latter is deemed too absolutist and less tolerant toward the plurality of interpretations of religion.

# Summary

In the 20th century, Indonesia has witnessed an abundance of works on Qur'anic exegesis that not only demonstrate an increased interest in the study of the Qur'an, but also convey the growing conviction that any articulation of Islam in the modern age has to start from its revealed text. Against this backdrop, Muhammad Quraish Shihab who was born in 1944 into an Indonesian reformist Hadrami family, emerges as a scholar and exegete whose renown is partly based on his Bachelor's, Master's and doctoral degrees in Qur'anic exegesis from al-Azhar University in Cairo.

It is my contention that Indonesian religious scholars, the *'ulamā'*, more and more frequently face the challenge of "indigenizing" Islam in a country located at the periphery of the Islamic world. In the post-colonial era, they are also confronted with the new identitarian framework of the nation-state that is of great importance to peoples who have gone through the experience of being colonized. Since the late 1960s, outstanding Indonesian scholars have continuously striven to formulate theological foundations that reconcile Islam with a fundamentally transformed social and political context. For instance, Nurcholish Madjid (1939-2005), a scholar who was based in an educated, urban middle-class milieu, proposed ways of making Islam compatible with both modernity and the Indonesian context; Islam, according to him, has to be a part of and play a significant role in modernization processes and the construction of Indonesian-ness. Meanwhile, Abdurrahman Wahid (1940-2009), who was born into a family of leaders of the traditionalist *Nahdlatul Ulama* ("The awakening of the *'ulamā'*", one of two Islamic mass organizations in Indonesia), was a strong advocate of the idea of *pribumisasi Islam* ("indigenizing Islam") by which he strove to convince the Indonesian Muslim public of the orthodoxy of local manifestations of Islam in the Indonesian context. In line with these tendencies, Quraish Shihab strives to make religion workable within the modern context of Indonesian pluralistic society through the slogan *membumikan al-Qur'an* ("making the Qur'an down-to-earth").

The basic idea of *membumikan,* in Shihab's conception, is to use the Qur'an as the primary source of inspiration and guidance in order to address contemporary

challenges that Muslim societies are facing. Furthermore, he proposes to solve the old question regarding the relation between the fixed text and the constantly changing realities by means of analogy, taking into consideration public interests (*maṣāliḥ*; sing. *maṣlaḥa*). By including *maṣāliḥ* into the process of interpretation, Shihab conceptualizes religion as a dynamic entity. With respect to Islamic law, Shihab uses not only the legal instrument of *maṣlaḥa*, but also that of *taysīr* ("lenience") in order to enable Muslims to reconcile the demands of their everyday lives with their faith. In addition, he considers it necessary to differentiate between religious and worldly affairs in order to address the changing social and political circumstances under which Muslims are living. While religious affairs, according to him, are fully subject to the dictates of revelation, worldly affairs should be left to people's discretion as long as the results do not contradict the general principles laid down by the revealed texts. This approach to the religious texts was introduced in the modern period primarily by the enlightened reformist scholars affiliated with Muhammad Abduh's school of thought and has become popular within Azharite circles since the second half of the 20th century.

The rapid expansion of Islamic higher education and the spread of new, increasingly accessible media led not only to the emergence of new actors who claim to speak for Islam, but also to a relocation of religious discourses into spaces outside the sphere of conventional religious learning. The appearance of Quraish Shihab on television with his Qur'anic lectures can be seen as an attempt on the part of the *ʿulamāʾ* to penetrate into this new sphere of public religious discourse. His calm and reasoned lectures challenge the prevailing emotionalized marketing of piety that meets the capitalist agenda of most TV stations.

Quraish Shihab realizes that his Qur'anic project will become more meaningful if it is put into action collectively through the collaboration of various actors. The foundation of the Center for Qur'anic Studies in 2004 can be seen as an attempt to serve this objective. The Center develops comprehensive programs, research projects and strategies for disseminating its ideas. Furthermore, it invites professors of Qur'anic exegesis to participate in its programs. It offers systematic training in the methods and principles of Qur'anic interpretation, mainly for post-graduate students who are expected to be future exegetes and, therefore, to take on the task of articulating religious teachings in the future. The foundation of the Center

for Qur'anic Studies as a private and independent institution also seems to enhance the authority of Quraish Shihab as a religious scholar, for it is often mentioned explicitly when he is introduced to his audience. All in all, this institution embodies the emergence of a new school of Qur'anic exegesis in contemporary Indonesia.

# Zusammenfassung

Im Verlauf des 20. Jh. erschien in Indonesien eine bedeutende Zahl von Werken der Koranexegese. Darin manifestierte sich nicht nur ein wachsendes Interesse am Studium des Korans, sondern auch die Überzeugung, dass die Artikulation des Islams in der Moderne seinen Offenbarungstext zum Ausgangspunkt nehmen müsse. Vor diesem Hintergrund wirkte Muhammad Quraish Shihab, geboren 1944 in eine aus dem Hadramaut stammende indonesische Gelehrtenfamilie, als Religionsgelehrter und Exeget, dessen Renommee sich auch auf seine an der Azhar-Universität in Kairo erworbenen akademischen Titel stützte.

Eine These der Arbeit lautet, dass indonesische Religionsgelehrte, die *ʿulamāʾ*, sich immer häufiger vor der Herausforderung sehen, den Islam in einem Land an der Peripherie der islamischen Welt zu „indigenisieren". In der postkolonialen Ära sind sie darüber hinaus konfrontiert mit dem neuen identitären Referenzrahmen des Nationalstaats, der für ehemals kolonisierte Völker von hoher Bedeutung ist. Seit den späten 1960er Jahren bemühen sich herausragende indonesische Gelehrte darum, theologische Grundlagen für die Kompatibilität des Islams mit dem neuen gesellschaftlichen und politischen Kontext zu formulieren. So befasste sich zum Beispiel Nurcholish Madjid (1939-2005), der in einem gebildeten, städtischen Mittelschichtmilieu beheimatet war, mit der Vereinbarkeit des Islams sowohl mit der Moderne als auch mit der indonesischen Gesellschaft; Islam solle an den Modernisierungsprozessen und der Konstruktion des Indonesisch-Seins teilhaben und eine wichtige Rolle in ihnen spielen. Gleichzeitig war Abdurrahman Wahid (1940-2009), der einer Familie von führenden Mitgliedern der traditionalistischen *Nahdlatul Ulama* („Das Wiedererwachen der Gelehrten"; eine der beiden großen islamischen Massenorganisationen Indonesiens) entstammte, ein starker Verfechter der Idee des *pribumisasi Islam* („Indigenisierung des Islam"), die dazu dienen sollte, die indonesische muslimische Öffentlichkeit von der Orthodoxie der lokalen Erscheinungsformen des Islams im indonesischen Kontext zu überzeugen. In Übereinstimmung mit diesen Tendenzen strebt Quraish Shihab danach, Religion im modernen Kontext der pluralistischen indonesischen Gesellschaft praktikabel zu

machen, was sich im Slogan *membumikan al-Qur'an* („den Koran erden/ in der Welt verankern") widerspiegelt.

Die Grundidee des *membumikan* ist gemäß Shihabs Konzept, den Koran als primäre Quelle der Inspiration und Rechtleitung zu nutzen, um die Herausforderungen zu meistern, denen sich die zeitgenössische muslimische Gesellschaft gegenübersieht. Außerdem schlägt er vor, die alte Frage nach dem Verhältnis zwischen dem unveränderlichen Text und der sich ständig wandelnden Wirklichkeit durch Analogieschlüsse zu lösen, die die *maṣāliḥ* (sg. *maṣlaḥa*, „öffentliches Interesse") berücksichtigen. Durch den Einbezug der *maṣāliḥ* in den Interpretationsprozess gewinnt Religion für Shihab einen dynamischen Charakter. Im Bereich des islamischen Rechts nutzt Shihab neben dem juristischen Instrument der *maṣlaḥa* das des *taysīr* („Erleichterung"), um es Muslimen zu ermöglichen, die Anforderungen ihres diesseitigen Lebens mit ihrem Glauben zu vereinbaren. Weiterhin verficht er die Notwendigkeit einer Differenzierung zwischen religiösen und weltlichen Angelegenheiten, um der Veränderung der gesellschaftlichen und politischen Bedingungen, unter denen Muslime leben, gerecht werden zu können. Religiöse Angelegenheiten unterlägen in vollem Umfang den Vorgaben der Offenbarung, während weltliche Angelegenheiten von Menschen frei gestaltet werden können, sofern dies nicht zu einem Verstoß gegen die allgemeinen Prinzipien des Offenbarungstextes führe. Diese Art des Zugangs zu den religiösen Quellen wurde in der Moderne vor allem durch die aufgeklärten Reformer der Schule Muḥammad ʿAbduhs eingeführt und wurde in Azhar-Kreisen in der zweiten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts populär.

Die starke Expansion des islamischen tertiären Bildungssektors und die Verbreitung neuer, immer leichter zugänglicher Medien brachten nicht nur neue Akteure hervor, die mit dem Anspruch auftraten, für den Islam zu sprechen, sondern führten auch zur Verlagerung von religiösen Diskursen in Räume außerhalb der Sphäre herkömmlicher religiöser Gelehrsamkeit. Das Auftreten von Quraish Shihab im Fernsehen mit seinen Vorträgen über den Koran kann als Versuch von Seiten der *ʿulamā'* verstanden werden, in diese neue Sphäre öffentlicher religiöser Diskurse vorzudringen. Seine ruhigen und überlegten Vorträge grenzen sich von der vorherrschenden emotionalisierten Form des Marketings von Frömmigkeit ab, die den kapitalistischen Interessen der meisten Fernsehsender entgegenkommt.

Quraish Shihab ist sich bewusst, dass sein koranisches Projekt an Bedeutung gewinnen wird, wenn es kollektiv im Zusammenwirken verschiedener Akteure umgesetzt wird. Die Gründung des Zentrums für Koranstudien 2004 kann als Versuch verstanden werden, dieses Ziel zu verwirklichen. Das Zentrum bietet umfassende Programme an und entwickelt Forschungsprojekte sowie Strategien, um seine Ideen zu verbreiten. Es lädt Professoren für Koranexegese ein, an seinen Programmen teilzunehmen. Außerdem bietet es systematische Aus- und Fortbildungsgänge in den Methoden und Prinzipien der Koraninterpretation an, hauptsächlich für Postgraduierte, die das Potenzial haben, in der Zukunft exegetisch tätig zu sein und religiöse Ideen zu artikulieren. Die Gründung des Zentrums für Koranstudien als private, unabhängige Einrichtung scheint die Autorität Quraish Shihabs als Religionsgelehrten zu erhöhen, denn sie wird oft explizit angeführt, wenn er gegenüber seinem Publikum eingeführt wird. Insgesamt verkörpert sich in dieser Institution die Entstehung einer neuen Tradition der Koranexegese im zeitgenössischen Indonesien.

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# List of Resource Persons

1. Muhammad Quraish Shihab (Director of PSQ)
2. Muchlis M. Hanafi (Program Manager of PSQ)
3. Yanti (Co-producer of *Tafsir al-Misbah* Metro TV)
4. Muhammad Arifin (member of the PSQ Expert Board)
5. Faried Saenong (member of the PSQ Expert Board)
6. Edy Junaedi (former Program Assistant at PSQ)
7. Adjie Zayadi (Program Assistant at PSQ)
8. A. Wahib Muthi (member of the PSQ Expert Board)
9. Faiq Ihsan Anshori (participant of PKM)
10. Syafi'uddin al-Ayyubi (participant of PKM)
11. M. Ulinnuha (participant of PKM)
12. Alivermana Wiguna (participant of PKM)
13. Mauidlotun Nisa (participant of PKM)
14. Media Zainul Bahri (lecturer at UIN Jakarta)
15. Arif Chasanul Muna (lecturer at State Islamic University of Pekalongan)

# List of Online Sources


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# Appendix

M. Quraish Shihab during the second conference of the Indonesian Branch of World Association for al-Azhar Graduates in 2012


M. Quraish Shihab giving a Qur'anic lecture, *Tafsir al-Misbah* 2014 on Metro TV