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The Context Of Inter-Religious Relations In The Writing Of Tafsir Al-Mishbah

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Abstract

This article discusses the important role of Tafsir Al-Misbah in describing the response of its author, M. Quraish Shihab, to the context of inter-religious life currently happening in the environment he lived in when he wrote this work, both when he was in Egypt and in Indonesia. Using socio-historic method, this article will see how the context of religious scope influence contemporary mufassir (interpreter) in writing the Tafsir al-Misbah. Meanwhile, to discover M. Quraish Shihab's thoughts, this article will use hermeneutic method. From thereon, this article aims at proving the theories suggested by Goldziher (1983), Hassan Hanafi (1988) and Farid Esack (1997) on the interrelatedness between context and interpretation, both the contexts of texts, interpreter and his historicity, and even political interest.

Keywords: M. Quraish Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, Context, Religion.

Introduction

In 2000s, the discourse of Indonesian tafsir (interpretation of Qur'an) found its revival momentum as Tafsir al-Mishbah was born as an intact work of al-Qur'an after fourty years witnessing the emergence of Tafsir al-Azhar by HAMKA. It takes quite a long enough for a new work in Indonesian language which is intact and gives a significant influence for Indonesian Muslims. According to Fiderspiel, Quraish Shihab's works in general and this work in particular, can be classified as strong ones and constitute "parameters against which better understanding of Islam are tested" (Federspiel, 1994:147-8). Tafsir Al-Misbah itself is M. Quraish Shihab's phenomenal work of his many works. This tafsir book was written after Quraish Shihab was dissatisfied with the previous tafsir book, i.e. Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim (Shihab, 2002: viii). From this, it can therefore understood that Tafsir Al-Misbah exists as an intact work in interpreting all verses of al-Qur'an and this serves as the important basis to grasp Quraish Shihab's thoughts on his contemplation of al-Qur'an (text) with the context he faces.

Many authors write in response to M. Quraish Shihab's thoughts, both through articles, journals, thesis and even dissertation. The first article on the thought of this figure is entitled "Menyatukan Kembali Al-Qur'an dan Umat, Menguak Pemikiran M. Quraish Shihab (Re-Integrating Al-Qur'an and [Islam] Followers, Disclosing M. Quraish Shihab's Thoughts)", written by Arief Subhan in "Pakar" (Expert)

column. This article discussed Quraish Shihab's thoughts before Tafsir al-Mishbah (Subhan, 1993: 9-16) was published. The next research is Popular Indonesia Literature of the Qur'an written by Howard M. Federspiel. In his "Epilog", Federspiel suggests that three Quraish Shihab's books: Lentera Hati, Membumikan Al-Qur'an and Wawasan Al-Qur'an can be classified as popular Indonesian tafsir works (Federspiel, 1994: 147-148). However, because since the beginning it aims at merely "describing" popular al-Qur'an literature in Indonesia in terms of popularity, reader group, origions of sources and writing quality, Tafsir al-Mishbah is omitted and excluded from being the objects of this Federspiel's study.

After Federspiel's work, some writings by local scholars began to pop up on this figure. Such works by Edi Bakhtiar (1999), Mustapa P (2001), Istianah (2002), Hamdani Anwar (2002), Herman Heizer (2003), Mukhlis Hanafi (2003), Ahmad Zainal Abidin (2006), Islah Gusmian (2003), Ahmad Zainal Abidin (2011), Mahbub Junaidi (2012), Naqiyah Mukhtar (2013), and Muzayin (2015) gave their receptions and responses to Tafsir al-Mishbah, be it from technical, methodological and thematical perspectives. Nevertheless, none of these works specifically review such scientific, Egypt and Indonesia contexts which affect the understanding and selection of meanings in inter-religious relations theme in this tafsir. For this reason, this writing tries to open the discourse of religious context in Egypt and Indonesia which affects Quraish Shihab's thoughts through his monumental work, Tafsir al-Misbah. Also, through this writing, it will be seen to what extent Tafsir al-Misbah depicts the reality of M. Quraish Shihab's reality and his environmental context having reciprocal 'dialogue' which in this case makes this contemporary mufassir takes a stand to the religious phenomena he encountered.

Research Method

This research used socio-historic and hermeneutic methods. The historic method was used to trace the past social context, particularly the inter-religious relations context in Egypt and Indonesia when this tafsir was written. Meanwhile, the hermeneutic method was used to understand and disclose M. Quraish Shihab's thoughts. This research aimed at proving the theories suggested by Goldziher (1983), Hassan Hanafi (1988), and Farid Esack (1997) on the interrelatedness between context and interpretation, be it the text, the interpreter and his/her historicity, and even his/her political interest contexts (Hanafi, 1988: 537, 546). Mufassir as the subject was always influenced by something from two-way sources, namely internal sources in the form of science, experience and development of his/her thoughts, and external sources in the form of situation, condition and discources and knowledge and technology developing at that time and place (Shihab, 2005a, Vol. I: xvii; Shihab, 2006: 26-27).

M. Quraish Shihab and Tafsir Al-Misbah

1. M. Quraish Shihab Biography
M. Quraish Shihab is not a new name for those studying al-Qur'an. He is a well-known contemporary mufassir in Indonesia. Many important roles have been played by him, including the rector of IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta for 1992-1998, Chairman of (Central) Indonesia Ulema Council for 1985-1998, a member of People's Consultative Assembly of the Republic of Indonesia (MPR-RI) for 1982-1987 and 1987-2002, and assuming the position of Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia in 1998 (Shihab, 2013: 5-6). The name of

this director of Center for Al-Qur'an Study is even listed as one of the world's most influential ulema figures, i.e. 500 most influential Muslims in the world.

M. Quraish Shihab was born on February 16, 1944, in Rappang, Sidenreng Rappang Regency, South Sulawesi (Shihab, 1995: vii). He belonged to a family with a Arabic Quraish lineage, i.e. educated Bugis. Since his early life, he had been familiarized with al-Qur'an. His father always had him attend the al-Qur'an study he organized, in addition to having him recited al-Qur'an. Even since he was 6-7 years old, he had been told about stories in al-Qur'an by his father. This was what made him highly interested in studying and exploring al-Qur'an. In addition, his family and the neighborhood he lived in during his youth played a significant role in guiding him develop his knowledge. His father who was a great ulema and professor in tafsir field played a great role for M. Quraish Shihab.

Quraish Shihab finished his elementary school in Makassar, then he continued his study to Pondok Pesantren (Islamic Boarding School) Darul Hadis Al-Faqhiyah, Malang. While he was still in the boarding school, in 1958 M. Quraish Shihab was transferred to Tsanawiyah school Al-Azhar, and he continued his senior high study in this Pyramid country. In 1967, he successfully obtained his Lc title, followed by M.A. title in 1969 at the same department. Then, in 1982 M. Quraish Shihab finally finished his doctoral degree in al-Qur'an science field. This education journey of his–in Howard M. Federspiel's opinion-made him unique and well-educated. This was because at that time, such a (doctoral) degree was usually obtained in Western countries (Federspiel, 1994: 294).

As an ulema, scholar, and mufassir whom many turn to in Indonesia, it is unsurprising that M.

Quraish Shihab has contributed his thoughts in the form of his works. Among M. Quraish Shihab's works are Tafsir Al-Mishbah; Pesan, Kesan, dan Keserasian al-Qur'an [Tafsir Al-Mishbah; Messages, Impressions and Congeniality of al-Qur'an] (2003), Tafsir Al-Manar, Keistimewaan dan Kelemahannya [Tafsir Al-Manar, Its Distinctions and Weaknesses] (1984), Menyingkap Tabir Ilahi; Asma al-Husna dalam Perspektif al-Qur'an [Revealing Divine Veil: Asma al-Husna in al-Qur'an's Perspective] (1998), Untaian Permata Buat Anakku [A String of Gems for My Child] (1998), Pengantin al-Qur'an [al-Qur'an-based Bride and Groom] (1999), Haji Bersama Quraish Shihab [Hajj with Quraish Shihab] (1999), Sahur Bersama Quraish Shihab [Suhoor with Quraish Shihab] (1999), Panduan Puasa bersama Qurasih Shihab [Fasting Guidelines with Quraish Shihab] (2000), Panduan Shalat bersama Quraish Shihab [Prayer Guidelines with Quraish Shihab] (2003), Anda Bertanya, Quraish Shihab Menjawab Berbagai Masalah Keislaman, Fatwa-fatwa M. Quraish Shihab Seputar Ibadah Mahdah [You Ask a Question, Quraish Shihab Answers: Various Islamic Issues, M. Quraish Shihab's Fatwas on Ibadah Mahdah] (1999), Fatwa-fatwa M. Quraish Shihab Seputar Ibadah dan Muamalah [M. Quraish Shihab's Fatwas on Ibadah {Worshipping} and Muamalah {Interactions with Others}] (1999), Fatwa-fatwa M. Quraish Shihab Seputar al-Qur'an dan Hadits, Studi Kritis Tafsir al-Manar [M. Quraish Shihab Fatwas on al-Qur'an and Hadith, a Critical Study of Tafsir al-Manar] (1996), Lentera Hati; Kisah dan Hikmah Kehidupan [Lantern of the Heart; Stories and Lessons of Life] (1994), Membumikan al-Qur'an; Fungsi dan Kedudukan Wahyu dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat [Grounding al-Qur'an; Function and Position of Divine Revelation in People's Life] (1994), Wawasan al-Qur'an; Tafsir Maudhu'i atas Perlbagai Persoalan Umat [al-

Qur'an Insights; Thematic Interpretaion of Various Muslims' Problems] (1996), Secercah Cahaya Ilahi; Hidup bersama al-Qur'an [A Glimmer of Divine Light; Living with al-Qur'an] (1999), and so forth.

Among these M. Quraish Shihab's works, Tafsir Al-Mishbah is the biggest one and a phenomenal work in the field of al Qur'an interpretation, particularly in the current modern-contemporary era. This book presents each surah, allowing people to easily understand the theme or topics contained in the surah.

2. Tafsir Al-Mishbah

a. Background for Writing
It can be said that Tafsir Al-Mishbah is the second tafsir book written by Quraish Shihab, after Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim published by Pustaka Hidayah in 1997 (Shihab, 2002: viii). However, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim was not too attractive to be a reading material in general, some even criticized it for being pleonastic in its presentation. This made Quraish Shihab dissatisfied with this work of his, thus he then wrote a book of al-Qur'an interpretation which tried to present every topic of each surah by firstly explaining its purpose or main theme. Basing his work on the need to explain the theme and purpose of every surah, Quraish Shihab tried to disclose the content of al-Qur'an with a "Message, Impression, Congeniality" which could be understood by its readers. This was implied in its title, i.e. Tafsir Al-Mishba: Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an [Tafsir Al-Mishbah; Messages, Impressions and Congeniality of al-Qur'an]. Meanwhile, the 'message' to be conveyed in this work is that there is a main message in every surah of al-Qur'an which can be found by studying and understanding the main themes of that surah, which if the themes of all 114 surahs in al-Qur'an can be understood,

then al-Qur'an will be more easily understood and makes it closer to its readers (Shihab, 2002: ix).

The 'impression' which Quraish Shihab cared about here is that explaining the main theme and purpose of each surah can create the right impression and at the same time correct the erroneous impressions as can be seen from the fact that one surah is more favored than others. Furthermore, Quraish Shihab criticized the phenomenon of favoring and prioritizing certain surahs, such as surah Yasin, al-Waqiah, and ar-Rahman. This—according to Quraish Shihab—is due to a misunderstanding of the purpose of the verses people are reading, and is worsened by basing this understanding on weak hadith (Shihab, 2002: ix-x). Meanwhile, the 'congeniality' in his tafsir work means that the way the verses and surah in al-Qur'an are structured have a congeniality which contains touching educational elements. Moreover, to make one verse congenial with another, some insertions of words or sentences which serve as an explanation (interpretation) are needed, this also serves as a bridge to understand the language styles used by al-Qur'an which have a tendency to be 'ijaz (abridgment) (Shihab, 2002: x).

Furthermore, Quraish Shihab through this work wishes to suggest that al-Qur'an shall not merely be read, rather it should be more than that. al-Qur'an should be studied and explored, as implied in the word iqra'i in the first divine revelation (QS. al-Alaq). Moreover, the recitation done should be equipped with awareness of al-Qur'an's venerability, appreciation along with tazakkir and tadabbur. In this regard, Allah even condemn those who do not use their minds and hearts to understand al-Qur'an (see QS. Muhammad: 20) (Shihab, 2002: vi).

b. Writing Structure

In a video recording in a Facebook account 'Shihab dan Shihab' ("Shihab dan Shihab" second episode, published by Roney 118 on June 29, 2017) Quraish Shihab mentions his great work, i.e. Tafsir Al-Misbah. He suggests that in writing Tafsir al-Misbah he never thought even once that this would even required fifteen volumes, even the initial plan was not longer than four volumes. However, as he deep dived al-Qur'an, the deeper he got the more amazed he was with the light of al-Qur'an, making himself unaware that he had written fifteen volumes. In fact—as he acknowledged himself—he thought there were more in al-Qur'an he had not been able to explain. This was because anyone approaching al-Qur'an would find that there were more to be revealed from al-Qur'a for them. This phenomenal work of Quraish Shihab consists of fifteen (XV) volumens, which successfullly discuss all 30 juz of al-Qur'an or 114 surah. From the explanations contained in every volume, different thicknesses of one volume to another are inevitable. Finally, below is the table containing the volumes, names of surah, and number of pages in Tafsir Al-Misbah work:

No	Volume	Name of Surah	No. of Pages
1	I	Al-Fatihah dan Al-Baqarah	624
2	II	Ali 'Imran dan An-Nisa'	659
3	III	Al-Maidah	257
4	IV	Al-An'am	366
5	V	Al-A'raf, Al-Anfal, At-Taubah	765
6	VI	Yunus, Hud, Yusuf, Ar-Rad	611
7	VII	Ibrahim, Al-Hijr, Al-Nahl, Al-Isra'	585
8	VIII	Al-Kahfi, Maryam, Taha, Al-Anbiya	524
9	IX	Al-Hajj, Al-Mu'minin, Al-Nur, Al-Furqan	554
10	X	Asy-Syu'ara, Al-Naml, Al-Qasas, Al-'Ankabut	547
11	XI	Ar-Rum, Luqman, Al-Sajdah, Al-Ahzab, Saba', Fathir, Yasin	582
12	XII	Al-Saffat, Sad, Al-Zumar, Gafir, Fussilat, Al-Syuara, Al-Zukhruf	601
13	XIII	Al-Dukhan, Al-Jathiya, Al-Ahqaf, Muhammad, Al-Fath, Al-Hujurat, Qaf, Al-Dzariyat, Al-T}ur, Al-Najm, Al-Qamar, Al-Rahman, Al-Waqi'ah, Al-Hadid, Al-Mujadalah, Al-Hasyir	586
14	XIV	Al-Mumtahanah, Al-Saff, Al-Jumu'ah Al-Munafiqun, Al-Tagabun, Al-Talaq, Al-Tahrim, Tabaraq, Al-Qalam, Al-Haqqah, Al-Ma'arij, Nuh, Al-Jinn, Al-Muzzammil, Al-Muddassir, Al-Qiyamah, Al-Insan, Al-Mursalat, Al-Naba, Al-Nazi'at, 'Abasa	965
15	XV	Al-Takwir, Al-Infitar, Al-Mutaffifin, Al-Insyiqaq, Al-Buruj, At-Tariq, Al-'Ala, Al-Ghasyiyah, Al-Fajr, Al-Balad, Al-Syams, Al-Lail, Al-Duha, Al-Syarh, At-Tin, Al-'Alaq, Al-Qadr, Al-Bayyinah, Al-Zalzalah, Al-'Adiyat, Al-Qari'ah, At-Takasur, Al-'Asr, Al-Humazah, Al-Fil, Quraisy, Al-Ma'un, Al-Kautsar, Al-Kafirun, Al-Tabbat, Al-Ikhlas, Al-Falaq, An-Nas.	644
		Total Pages	**8,600**

In its presentation, this tafsir work shows explanations based on tafsir Mushafi, i.e. following the sequence of surah in mushhaf (from al-Fatihah to Al-Nas). Some explanations are meant to be an introduction to the interpretation of a surah, which involve:

1. Providing information on the number of verses in the surah, and the place it was revealed (Makkiyah or Madaniyah).
2. Providing explanation on the name of surah. For example, its other name (if any), or the reasons why it was named as it was.
3. Providing elucidation on the general theme discussed in the surah.
4. Providing explanation of the congeniality or munasabah of previous surah.
5. Providing information of the surah's sequential number, and brief explanation regarding the names of surah revealed before or after this surah.
6. Providing explanation on asbabun nuzul (if any).

M. Quraish Shihab in this tafsir also classifies some verses in a surah into smaller groups, these grouped verses are deemed to have tight relations. Furthermore, Quraish Shihab, in drawing conclusion, always gives important explanations regarding the munsabah or congeniality aspects of the surah. Meanwhile, in concluding his interpretation, the expression wa Allahu A'lam has always been chosen to end the explanation of each surah.

c. Method and Source of Interpretation
Tafsir Al-Misbah uses tahlili method, i.e. a method which explains all aspects contained in each verse. This is of course to produce a meaning which

matches and is congenial in the sequence of each verse. Furthermore, Quraish Shihab uses al-Ijtihad al-hidai approach, i.e. an approach of hidayah (guidance) nuance for its readers. This is because the interpreter's goal is to correct the mistake made by people regarding their understanding of al-Qur'an content. Meanwhile, the source or reference used in Tafsir Al-Misbah includes: Sahih al-Bukhari by Muhammad bin Ismail al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim by Muslim bin Hajjaj, Nazm al-Durar by Ibrahim bin Umar al-Biqa'i, Fi Zhilal Al-Qur'an by Sayyid Qutb, Tafsir al-Mizan by Muhammad Husain al-Thabathaba'il, Tafsir Asma' al-Husna by al-Zajjaj, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Azim by Ibn Kasir, Tafsir Jalalain by Jalaluddin al-Mahalli and Jalaluddin al-Suyuthi, Tafsir al-Kabir by Fakhruddin ar-Razi, al-Kasyaf by az-Zamakhsyari, Nahwa Tafsir al-Maudu'i by Muhammad al-Ghazali, al-Dur al-Mansur by al-Suyuti, at-Tabrir wa at-Tanwir by Muhammad Thahir ibnu Asyur, Ihya 'Ulumuddin and Jawahir al-Qur'an by Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, Bayan I'jaz al-Qur'an by al-Khaththabi, Mafatih al-Ghaib by Fakhruddin ar-Razi, al-Burhan by al-Zarkasyi, Asrar Tartib al-Qur'an and Al-Itqan by as-Suyuti, al-Naba' al-Azim and al-Madkhal ila al-Qur'an al-Karim by Abdullah Darraz, al-Manar by Muhammad Abduh and Rasyid Rida, and many more.

Inter-Religious Relations Context in Tafsir Al-Misbah

In Tafsir al-Mishbah, a dynamic narrative is found between the affirmation of Islam exclusivity as the only correct religion and Islam as a religion of submission to God's will embraced by all prophets. This has something to do with Quraish Shihab's interpretation of the verse Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam (QS. Ali 'Imran: 19). In his interpretation, Quraish Shihab explains that the understanding which is based on the translation or brief meaning of this

verse, is indeed true, yet the true content is unclear, hence there is a need to explore the meaning of this verse, i.e. by seeing the context of understanding in the previous verse. According to Quraish Shihab, religion is characterized by absolute self-submission of a servant to Allah. In this context, Islam as defined as self-submission is the essence which has existed since Prophet Adam to Prophet Muhammad, this has been what Allah decided. Ibnu Katsir argued that this verse (QS. Ali 'Imran: 19) means that the Islam referred to herein was the religion taught by messengers of Allah until the Prophet Muhammad. From here onward, Quraish Shihab affirms that "Islam is the religion of the prophets", thus Islam is not restricted to the teachings taught by the Prophet Muhammad, rather Islam means self-submission and compliance of creatures to God the Almighty through the teachings taught by those messengers (Shihab, 2005a, II: 38).

In addition, on religious relations Quraish Shihab emphasizes the need for dialogue, mutual respect and understanding among different religion followers. This Quraish Shihab's explanation can be seen, for example, when he interprets surah al-Mumtahanah: 8-9, where he states as follows:

> The command to confront kafir people (non-Muslims) stated by those verses earlier might pose an impression that all non-Muslims should be confronted. To repulse this false impression, the verses above (QS. Al-Mumtahanah: 8-9) set the basic principle of interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims. The verses above expressly mention the name of the Almighty by stating: it is Allah who orders you to be decisive towards kafir people—even if he/she is your relative—not forbid you from building a relation and do good deeds to those who do not fight you because of religion and do not either expel you from your homes. Allah does not forbid you from being righteous in any form whatsoever toward them and does not forbid you from acting justly toward them. Therefore, if in a social interaction they are on the right, and one of you is on the wrong, then you should defend and win them..." (Shihab, 2005a, XIV, 167).

Furthermore, Quraish Shihab explains that the verse not fight you in the religion (din) with the following explanation:

> His words: lam yuqa@tilu@kum/ do not fight you uses mudha@ri/ present tense form. This can be understood to bear the meaning "they factually are fighting you", and the word fi@ which means in implies that at that time the speech partner seems as if they are within the vessel hence nothing of their situation is beyond the vessel. With the words fi@ ad-di@n/in the religion, any war triggered by worldly matters irrelevant to religion should be excluded, and this exclude anyone who is not factually fighting Muslims—including those during the Prophet era, i.e. 'Khuza'ah tribe, and also women and Ahl adz-Dzimmah (residents of Ahl al-Kitab nation who pay tax). Acting righteous towards them is one of the forms of noble character (Shihab, 2005a, XIV, 167-168).

The word tabarru@hum is taken from the word birr which means vast virtues. One of Allah's name is al-Bir. This is due to His vast virtues. The lands unfolded on the earth is named bar due to its

vastness. Using this word, the verse implies the permit to do many righteous acts for non-Muslims, as long as they do not inflict any negative impacts for Muslims (Shihab, 2005a, XIV, 168).

From this explanation, it can be seen how Quraish Shihab interprets inter-religious relations. However, this research is not about how the theme is narrated and explored in his work, since many works have studied it. Rather, it focuses on how the inter-religious relations context was in the writing of this work until it was present among Indonesians. As a tafsir with adabi ijtima'i color (Anwar, 2002: 184), Tafsir al-Mishbah deals with social themes more extensively than with other aspects, such as fiqh, even though the author was a former Chairman of Indonesian Ulema Council whose capacity and knowledge in Islamic law field are undoubted. Quraish Shihab, who is also a former Administrator of Perhimpunan Ilmu-Ilmu Syari'ah (Sharia Sciences Organization), discusses the Islamic law/fiqh in his tafsir pretty simply and relatively brief, unlike his discussion on other social themes.

This research finds that at least three context affect the construction of Quraish Shihab's socio-religious thoughts, namely scientific context, Egypt context and Indonesia context. The first context is scientific context. The formal education prior to his study at al-Azhar and his family, particularly his father who was a tafsir expert, colored his way of thinking (2007: 3-6). And this was strengthened with his stay in Egypt while studying at al-Azhar from Tsanawiyyah to his graduation from Doctoral program (Reid, 1995, I: 228-232). Eleven years were enough for shaping the personality and paradigm of thinking which affected Quraish Shihab's thoughts later. The normative scientific-oriented teaching

and education with memorization of certain texts had a real implication in understanding the normative teachings he learned (Maseleno et al., 2019). This method also resulted in the minimum number of other references taught and non-Arabic references in his works, particularly Tafsir al-Mishbah (Federspiel, 1994:148).

In addition to the two phases above, Quraish Shihab acknowledged the significant influence on him from Middle East figures, particularly Egypt (Shihab, 2005b: 23-24). This tafsir was written when he was an Ambassador (Muzani, 1994: 111-130) for Egypt, Jibouti and Somalia by the end of 90s, starting from June 18, 1999 AD to be precise (Shihab, 2005a: xiii) and continued in Jakarta until its completion in 2003 AD, or more or less four years, and it took seven hours to compile every single day (Shihab, 2006: 310).

The next factor which shaped his way of thinking was the customs of his family who were followers of Nahdiyyin customs. For his household, he was married to a wife named Fatmawati and from this marriage he was gifted with 5 children, they were Najeela, Najwa, Nasyawa, Nahla and Ahmad. Culturally, despite being born outside the Java island, the tradition running through Quraish Shihab and family was that of Nahdiyyin. Moreover, when he finished his primary education in Ujung Pandang, he was sent to the Islamic Boarding School Darul Hadith al-Faqihiyyah Malang, East Java, with Al-Habib Abdul Qadir Bilfaqih (born in Tarim Hadhramaut, Yemen, on 15 Shafar 1316 H, and died in Malang East Java on 21 Jumada al-Akhirah 1382H, or November 19, 1962 AD. The Nahdiyyin ideology and teachings in the boarding school directly and indirectly affected and shaped Shihab's attitude and paradigm towards Islamic teachings (Afrizal, 2012: 13).

The second one is Egypt context. Egypt in 1990s was a country with varied religious views and schools of thought. Under the constitution of Egypt article 45, three religions were officially acknowledged by the country, namely Islam, Christianity and Jew as Abrahamic religions. Muslims constituted the majority with an estimation of 80-90% of the total Egypt population. Meanwhile, Christianity formed approximately 10-16% (Zaidan, 1999: 61) or 15-20% where 95% of them was Coptic Christians. This number was the largest for Christian populations in all Middle East region and Egypt. Jew was a minority with approximately 1000s followers. From the total Muslim population, Sunni schools of thought dominated it with Shia, Mu'tazilah and others being the minorities. There was a tiny portion of them who identified themselves as atheists and agnostics (Baker, 2001:48-49).

In inter-religious context, the issues receiving most attention in Egypt was the relations between majority group Muslim and Coptic Christians and the relations between Egypt and Israel which was politically dynamic; it sometimes got heated and sometimes cooled down. Egyptians were highly fanatics in religion, just like Indonesians from theological perspective. The conflict between Muslims and Coptic Christians had received attention from around the world in many occassions at varied tensions from highly tense to relatively peaceful. Peace was actually the general picture between them even if the tension potentials could not be ignored. Since 1970s, the tension resulting from religious issues escalated sharply. Church arson, murder stemming from religious background and physical clash between these two communities frequently emerged (Zaidan, 1999, 61-63; Baker, 2001: 49).

The third one was Indonesia context. In the mid 1990s decade, tension and physical confrontation emerged between Muslims and Christians in many places in Indonesia. During 1995-1997 period, it was reported that 89 churches were damaged or destroyed, some people were killed (Husein, 2000: 74). This tension reached its peak in two heartbreaking tribal wars between Christians and Muslims in Maluku and Central Sulawesi, resulting in 8,000 death tolls for a period of three years, from 1999 to 2002, and hundreds of thousands people could not return to their houses due to the uncertain security situation (Magniz-suseno, 2007:11).

In mid-1999, Indonesians witnessed bloody contentions and tragedies in for politic, economic and religious purposes occuring in both Indonesia and Egypt. When these contentions in the name of religion in his home country erupted between 1995 and 1997, Quraish Shihab was the chairman of MUI, the president advisor and even Minister of Religion in 1998. This was the hard time in Muslim-Christian relations in some conflict areas (Saefullah, 2007: 171).

The tension between Christians and Muslims never went out. The history of relations of these two religions had been full of obstacles for ages, and the fact that Christianity was brought along by the colonialist inherited trust issues and prejudice between them, since one of the colonialist agenda was to spread Christianity in the archipelago (Zending) (Turmudzi, 2010: 513-531; Daya: 1993: 464-466). In addition, the competitions in socio-politic and economic at local levels heated the relations further (Mujiburrahman, 2006: 292-4). The attack plan was prepared on the basis of economic and political motives. This could be seen from the 30 bombs exploded in Christian churches in the Christmas Eve in 1999 (Magniz-suseno, 2007:3).

The reality of conflict between religions and groups in Egypt and

Indonesia which needed solutions and contribution led Quraish Shihab to deliver his relatively moderate view to prevent the contentions and bloodshed from worsening further. As the one in charge of policies in the field of religion, he tried to mitigate these conflicts by offering a tafsir far away from conflict narrative. This was implied in his interpretation on the content of surah al-Anfal: 61-62. Quraish Shihab stated that peace was the ideal every human being kept on longing for. From this, Quraish Shihab emphasized that Muslims were not merely the receiving party of peace offered by non-Muslims, rather they were also given with a right to provide peace in order to achieve a greater good (Shihab, 2005a, V, 487-488).

The same applied to Indonesia context; amidst the plural society of Indonesia, Quraish Shihab offered a neutral view that dialogues, harmonious relations in social field and peace were all commanded by the religion (see Shihab, 2005a, XIV: 168-170; Shihab,1992: 372-373).

From the explanation above, it could clearly be seen that M Quraish Shihab's interpretation of verses of al-Qur'an on inter-religious relations in

Tafsir al-Mishbah went hand in hand with the demand of Egypt and Indonesia societies who needed harmonious solutions and peace between the groups normatively to allow the conflict between religious groups to subside. This was consistent with the interpreter's (mufassir) position who was the chairman of MUI, family advisor of the president and the Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia who was mandated to be actively engaged in solving socio-religious problems in the society.

This research proved that the thesis of Ignaz Goldziher (1983) in Mazahib al-Tafsir al-Islami which suggested that every interpretation could not be separated from the reality accompanying the interpreter was true. It also matched Hassan Hanafi's (1988) thesis which read that an understanding was always related to the interpreter's interest in the text and each text and its interpretation had its own historicity context. This finding also supported Farid Esack's (1997) thesis who stated that every understanding required pre-understanding. This pre-understanding was the socio-historic reality accompanying the interpreter's life.

Results and Discussion
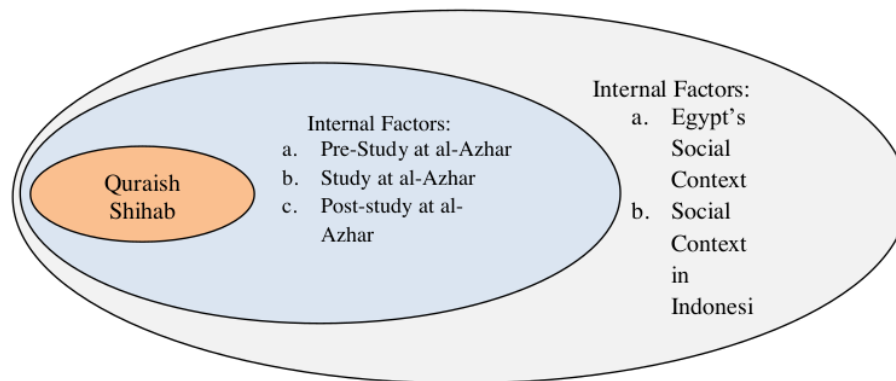
From his academic journey, based on the scheme above, we could take two internal

and external factors which affected the epistemology of Quraish Shihab's

interpretation in his tafsir work. Internal factors were the scientific context which shaped Quraish Shihab's paradigm of thinking. The writer classified these factors into three context, namely his pre-study at al-Azhar, study and post-study at al-Azhar.

During his pre-study at al-Azhar, he was mostly influenced by the social setting of his family and society. As stated earlier, the customs in Shihab's family was that of Nahdiyyin (Nahdlatul Ulama) which was relatively more moderate than other schools of thought in the archipelago (Hosen, 2014:14). The Nahdiyyin teachings he learned since his childhood surely significantly affected his attitude and nature in his socio-religious behavior. This was then strengthened by his study to a number of Nahdiyyin boarding schools in Java, particularly in Islamic Boarding School Darul Hadith al-Faqihiyyah Malang, East Java, with Al-Habib Abdul Qadir Bilfaqih, who was a great ulema whose knowledge and insights were extensive and kept on teaching his students to be low profile, tolerant, and loving the Ahl al-Bait, having extensive insights, prevented him from blindly following only one opinion (Afrizal, 2012: 22). It was in this boarding school that Quraish Shihab was introduced even further to the tradition of Nahdatul Ulama (NU), learned Arabic and many other disciplines in the religion (Gusmian, 2002: 80)

The next internal factor which affect Quraish Shihab's moderate attitude was the scientific context he found in the Middle East, particularly in Egypt. Shihab was influenced by a number of contemporary thinkers while he was studying in Egypt, including Qasim Amin, Muhammad Abduh, Sa'id al-Asymawi, and Thahir bin Asyur (Chamim Thohari, 2014:76). His contact with some contemporary moderate thinker figures in Egypt either directly or indirectly, directed him to shape the same

way of thinking. Later, the academic and administrative career development mandated to him upon his study at al-also served as the internal factors which demanded him to behave moderately towards various problems encountered by Muslims in the plural Indonesia (Subhan, 1993)

In addition to those internal factors above, external factors also affect Quraish Shihab's way of thinking significantly. These factors include the socio-political and cultural context in Indonesia and Egypt wherein Quraish Shihab performed his academic activities. For example, in addition to the religious relations problem discussed in this article, the influence could also be seen in his view regarding the ruling of jilbab in Indonesia (ChamimThohari, 2014: 78) Quraish Shihab's interpretation of jilbab-related verse (QS. Nur: 31) seemed more flexible by considering the customs applicable in Indonesia. The same was applied to the ruling of hand-cutting for thieves (QS. Al-Maidah: 38). Quraish Shihab preferred bending the ruling with imprisonment as per the law in Indonesia (Shihab, 2005: 326)

Conclusion

Three contexts were behind the birth of Tafsir al-Mishbah. These three contexts include scientifi context, Egypt context and Indonesia context. The scientific context was the scientific background of the tafsir author's family and formal education and the normative science at University of al-Azhar and the thinkers there. Egypt's socio-historic context was the frequently occuring conflict between Muslims and Coptic Christians which needed Qur'anic solutions. Meanwhile, the historic context of Indonesia which served as the basis for this tafsir to emerge was the conflict between followers of religions which occured in the plural Indonesian society which required solutions when one read

ambiguous-looking verses between the theologically exclusivity claim of Islam and the necessity to socially peaceful, dialogical and harmonious life.

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