

The Rules of Interpretation: How do Al-Qirā'āt Applied in Shihab's Exegesis?

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Abstract

Shihab is a scholar who has produced a comprehensive 30-chapter exegesis entitled *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*. In his exegesis of the Qur'an he applied several rules and were commonly observed by other exegetes to ensure their exegeses are in line with Islamic law. In view of this precedent, this study seeks to analyse the rules of interpretation applied by Shihab with special reference on his application of the qirā'āt 'readings'. To reach representative conclusions, this study undertakes an analysis of his exegesis by adopting the document analysis method by making language scriptures and venerated exegeses as the main sources of reference. This is to ensure that the rules that he had employed can be analyzed perfectly and also consistent with the conclusion made by the scholars. The study found that Shihab applied two rules related to qirā'at in his methodology, which have been affirmed by both scholars and exegetes.

Keywords: rules of interpretation, qirā'at, rhetoric, exegesis, Arabic.

1. Introduction

The rules of interpretation have been delineated early in Islam by Muslim scholars. The early emergence of the Qur'anic sciences was instrumental in giving birth to various religious disciplines, which can be collectively attributed to the motivation to understand the Qur'an. Some classic Muslim scholars have discussed the rules of interpretation, including al-Zarkashī who wrote *al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, and al-Suyūṭī with *al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*. Nonetheless, the studies on this subject have long been acknowledged before the works of these two prominent scholars.

According to Shihab (2011), Ibn Taimiyah is the pioneer of this science who produced the book entitled *Muqaddimah Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*. This was then followed by al-Kāfiyājī who wrote *al-Taisīr fī Qawā'id 'Ilm al-Tafsīr*. After this, scholarship in this area expanded with the introduction of several works, among which are *al-Qawā'id al-Ḥisān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* by al-Sa'dī, *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr wa Qawā'iduhu* by al-Āk, *Qawā'id al-Tarjīḥ Inda al-Mufasssīrīn* by al-Ḥarabī, *Qawā'id al-Tafsīr Jam'an wa Dirāsatan* by al-Sabt, *Mabāḥith Fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* by al-Qaṭṭān, and in the introduction of *Maḥāsīn al-Ta'wīl* by al-Qāsimī.

The qirā'āt (sg. qirā'at) represent the vast corpus of Qur'anic readings that are traditionally linked to the textual transmission and recitation of Islam's sacred book. It is to the skeletal text (*rasm*) of the Qur'an that all of these readings are ultimately bound, reflecting subtle variations in the linguistic features of the text. The nature of variance among these readings ranges from differences and distinctions which occur at the morphosyntactic and morphophonological levels of the Qur'anic text and are seemingly of an infinitesimal countenance, to those in which the nature of variance is more pronounced and reflected in consonantal variants and manifest instances of exegetical interpolation. These readings were the subject of critical grammatical analysis and scrutiny by the earliest Arabic grammarians as they attempted to accommodate their grammatical features within the confines of a general theory of language. Naturally, the qirā'at not only serve as important sources for the linguistic environment in early Islam, they also provide insights into attitudes toward the language of scripture and developments in grammatical thinking during the early period. Modern scholarship

has often referred to readings under the rubric Qur'anic variants, although, theoretically speaking, many of them are not deviations from the standard text but rather encapsulate intrinsic facets of its articulation (Shah, 2009).

Hence, in this vein, this article focuses on the study of the rules of interpretation employed by Shihab¹ in his *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*² that pertains to the science of rhetoric. This science describes a great, clear meaning which can exert such a beautiful influence in the soul, and its every verse relevant with the context and also suitable to be used for the addressees (al-Jārim & Amīn, 1998). The Qur'anic rhetoric can deliver noble values to mankind appropriate with the place and times, so much so that their wit and conscience succumb to the values. It encompasses three important sciences, namely *al-Ma'ānī* (word of order), *al-Badī'* (embellishments) and *al-Bayān* (figures of speech). For purposes of focus, this article focuses solely on a discussion of *qirā'āt* which is included in the substantial discussion in the science of *al-Ma'ānī*. In this context, an elaboration of rules of interpretation and the notion of *qirā'at* will be made, followed by an analysis of the level of validity, as seen in *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*. To begin by portraying the proper context, this study begins with a discussion of the development of *tafsīr* (exegesis) in Indonesia accompanied with a brief biographical sketch of Shihab.

2. Methodology

The research method used in this article is literature review with analytical approach, that is, analysis on Shihab's application of *qirā'āt* rules, and followed by review and comments. Data collection is the most common method to get data or facts related to the subject of research. The first source is *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* written by Shihab himself. The second source is the books, journals, and other suitable materials. All of these materials will be discussed in this article through library research.

3. The Development of *Tafsīr* in Indonesia

The Qur'anic translation and interpretation in the archipelago has long been explored by Indonesian exegetes. Muhammad (2002) said that the process was complete since the 17th century or 11th AH. This century signals the beginning of such efforts and is considered the first stage, whilst the beginning of the 20th century until now signals the second stage. During the first stage, *tafsīr* occurs based on the interpretation of texts in Arabic only, such as *Tarjuman al-Mustafid* by al-Fansuri from *Tafsīr Al-Baiḍāwī* in the 17th century, and *Terjemah Jalalayn* by KH Bagus Arafah Solo from *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* in the early 20th century. The second stage is mostly based on interpretations of Qur'anic verses, such as *Al-Quran dan Terjemahannya* by the Indonesian Ministry of Religion in 1965, and based on its commentary in Arabic, such as *Tafsīr al-Jalalayn* by Mahyuddin Shaf in 1990. Wan (2002) adds another book from the first stage, namely *Mirāḥ Labīd* by Shaykh al-Nawawi Bantani.

Referring to the second stage, this study found two different eras, before Indonesian Independence (1900-1945) and after (1945-present). The production of *tafsīr* before independence is known as the middle ages, and the scholars' efforts to interpret the Qur'an completely persist despite Indonesia remaining subject to colonisation. Their methodologies at this level completely differ from the classical period or after independence (modern). At that time, Indonesians faced fierce resistance from foreign invaders, which to some extent influenced exegetical approaches to the Qur'an. The books of *Tafsīr* written during this era include *al-Furqan* by A. Hassan Bandung (1928), *Tafsīr Hibarna* by Iskandar Indris (1934), *Tafsīr al-Qur'an al-Karim* by Halim Hassan et al. (1936), *Tafsīr al-Qur'an Bahasa Indonesia* by Mahmud Aziz (1935), to name a few.

As for the *tafsīr* works from the second era (after independence), this study finds that they still adopt old Indonesian spelling, such as *Tafsīr al-Qur'anul Karim* by Mahmud Yunus (1950), *Tafsīr Al-Quranul Al-Karim* by Fachruddin and Zainuddin Hamidi (1959), *Tafsīr al-Quran Al-Hakim* (1960) by Kasim Bakry, *Al-Ibriz* by Bisyrī Mustafa Rembang (1960), *Tafsīr Al-Azhar* by HAMKA (1967), *Tafsīr Al-Bayan* by Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy (1971), *Al-Huda* by Bakri Shahid (1972), etc. whereas *Tafsīr Al-Mishbah* (2002) by Shihab adopted the new Indonesian spelling. For this reason, one may assert that *Tafsīr Al-Misbah* is the latest exegetical work by Indonesian exegetes and continues to be referred to

¹Shihab is used in place of his full name, M. Quraish Shihab.

²*Tafsīr Al-Mishbah* is a complete Qur'anic exegesis containing the whole 30-chapter and consists of fifteen volumes produced by Indonesian exegete, namely Shihab. This book is one of the results of his greatest scientific works, apart from dozens of other books. It was written while he was still the Indonesian Ambassador to Egypt and was completed within four years. He started to write it while in Cairo on Friday, 18 June 1999. The book was completed by him in Jakarta on Friday 5 September 2003, spending an average of more than seven hours per day. It was printed for the first time in November 2000 by Lentera Hati publisher in Jakarta starting from volume 1 to 10.

by Muslim preachers, lecturers and students in Indonesia and Malaysia. It continues to be the subject of continuous research by scholars.

4. Shihab: A Great Indonesian Exegete

Shihab (1992) was born in Rappang, South Sulawesi on 16th February 1944. His early education was obtained from his father, Abdulrahman Shihab. His love of the Qur'an blossomed from the age of six. As a son of a famous exegete, he was often brought by his mother to attend religious classes given by his father. His mother also sparked his interest, as her constant encouragements and guidance resulted in his decision to further his studies in the field (Naja, 2007). Other than his parents' early involvement at home, he also studied at Pondok Pesantren Darul Hadith al-Faqihyyah, Malang. Soon after, in 1958 the state of Sulawesi awarded him a scholarship to study at the University of al-Azhar, Cairo, Egypt, and he was accepted to advance to grade two, *thanawiyah* al-Azhar. His academic journey later took him to the Department of Theology, University of al-Azhar wherein he majored in *Tafsir* and *Hadith*. He completed his bachelor degree in 1967. Two years later in 1969, Shihab obtained a master degree in the same field (Abur & Mazlan, 2014).

In 1980, Shihab furthered his Ph.D. degree in the same university. He completed his study in two years and obtained *mumtāz ma'a martabah al-sharaf al-ulā* grade (exemplary scholar with outstanding performance). His outstanding results qualified him as the first South East Asian student to obtain a Ph.D. degree in Qur'anic sciences from al-Azhar University (subhan, 1993). The process of intellectual growth experienced by Shihab for 13 years at the University of al-Azhar shaped his thought. He is also known as a religious figure and educator with his own publication house, Lentera Hati Publisher.

Al-Darrāz (1991) stated that a scholarly work could not escape seven points, namely a totally new article, completing the incomplete, explaining the vague and difficult, summarizing the long, updating the mixed, purifying the wrong and collecting the scattered. According to Mazlan & Abur (2013), Shihab did all these things well, and easily overcomes the limitations occurring when attempting to translate Islamic scholarship into the Indonesian language. In view of the above, there are little doubts his credentials in Qur'anic exegesis.

5. The Rules of Interpretation: Linguistic Basis and Functions

The rules of interpretation in Arabic language is a combination of two words namely *qawā'id* 'rules' and *al-tafsir* 'exegesis/interpretation'. *Qawā'id* in the language viewpoint according to al-Azharī (1964) and Ibn Manẓūr (1996) is defined as the foundation. Al-Kafawī (1998) on the other hand defined it as the pillars upon which everything rests, whereas Muṣṭafā *et al.* (1960) defined it as the foundation or pillars analogous to a building, or carry the meaning of something that is thorough in nature that encompasses every part. The rule terminology, according to al-Fayūmī (1990) is defined as a general summary that encompasses all the parts. On the other hand, al-Sabt (2001) defined it as a general stipulation by which provisions associated with the details were known.

According to al-Jurjānī (1985) and al-Fairūzabādī (1886), the definition of *al-tafsir* from the aspect of language is explaining something and making it clearer and more distinct, or uncovers something hidden. However, technically, al-Zarkashī (1988) defined it as a set of knowledge employed for the best understanding of the Qur'an which was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), clarifying its meaning, extracting thereof legal injunctions and wisdom with the aid of linguistics, Arabic grammar, the principles of jurisprudence, reasons of the revelation, and abrogation and abrogated.

Based on these definitions, it can be concluded that what is meant by the rule of interpretation is a set of rulings that are universal in nature, and used by exegetes as a guideline to reach the study of the meanings of the Qur'an and knowing the procedures to ascertain its wisdom.

Moreover, the rules that have been laid out by the scholars are not found to be similar in concept. Al-Saḍī (1999) for example was inclined to expand the rule in general through some religious understanding like the Islamic law and theology. Meanwhile, al-Suyūṭī, al-Qaṭṭān, and al-Sabt elaborated on this further. Other than that, the attitude and views of some scholars on the rules of interpretation are somewhat different. Some opine that the rule is binding and must be followed by other exegetes. Some have an opposing view, other than it serves as a guideline for any exegete. In this case, there is another view that as the exegesis is an effort that is in state of perpetual evolution, at par with social, knowledge, language development and so on, and then the rules of interpretation can be measured as a working guideline. As far as this is concerned, the rules do not force other exegetes to use the same guideline, but all exegetes have the right to use a different guideline in reference to the assigned methodological framework. In other words, the rules of interpretation are very important as guidelines for exegetes so that the exegeses produced are objective, academic and can be held accountable.

6. The Notion of *Qirā'at* in Qur'anic Rhetoric

The science of *al-Ma'ānī* examines the state of the word or utterance in terms of the suitability with the intended purpose (Ḥusain, 1977). It is based on the policies and the rules of utterances conveyed according to the suitability to the public as the recipients. The purpose is to avoid committing errors of meaning the way it is intended to be delivered by the addresser until it becomes understandable by the addressee (al-Hashīmī, 1960). In brief, it can be concluded that *al-Ma'ānī* means knowledge which discusses the position of the utterance that is in line with a given situation.

One of the important debates in this knowledge is *qirā'at* which means readings from the Qur'an readers associated with indigenous cities developed syntheses (*ikhtiyārāt*) of readings which were sourced to luminaries among the companions. They were identified as having derived their readings from the Prophet, defining a theoretical hierarchy of authority for the transmission of *qirā'at* (al-Ṣabūnī, 1970). According to Denny (1989) the word *qirā'a* also means recitation, but it does not occur in the Qur'an, and it also may mean the matter of recitation in the sense of the text, and/or its variant readings (*qirā'āt*).

Hence, the *qirā'at* issue has become an important debate in the Qur'anic science. In fact it was supported by the diversity of authentic *qirā'at* which is sourced from the Prophet (pbuh). Thereby the scholars have established that if the *qirā'at* is indeed from him, then it is recognised as authentic and, of itself, can be used as an argument.

Ibn al-Jazarī (n.d.) states that all *qirā'at* that is in accordance with the standard codex (*Muṣḥaf of ʿUthmānī*) and its chain of narration is authentic, it is an authentic *qirā'at* and cannot be denied. This includes parts of the revealed seven letters of the Qur'an. Humans must accept it, whether the *qirā'at* is from the seven imams or otherwise. This is the unanimous opinion of the great scholars, both predecessor (*Salaf*) and successor (*Khalaf*).

Ibn al-Jazarī's view is supported by al-Zarqānī as al-Dānī stated that concerning the letters of the Qur'an, the imams are not guided to the language that is most famous or most appropriate, but they are guided by authentic history. If it is authentic, then it cannot be denied because *qirā'at* is a custom (*sunnah*) which is replicated and must be accepted and practiced.

Based on these definitions, it can be understood that what is implied by *qirā'at* does not necessarily follow the requirements of Arabic grammar, but the most important thing to be noted in this issue is whether it is authentically sourced from the Prophet (pbuh). As a result, al-Suyūṭī (1996) said that Sa'īd ibn Manẓūr narrated in his *Sunan* from Zayd Ibn Thābit that "*Qirā'at* is a *sunnah*". Moreover, al-Bayhaqī said, "He (Zayd) means that in the letters of the Qur'an we should follow those before us. We cannot differ with the *Mushaf* and the famous *qirā'at*. Although it is possible in the linguistic method, or otherwise".

Furthermore, in Islamic literature, to denote a person who recites the Qur'an in its different *qirā'at* skilfully, beautifully, fluently and, which is particularly important, correctly according to *tajwid* (the art of reciting the Qur'an), one says that such a person is *qurrā'* (an expert in Qur'anic recitation), in which seven (or ten) *mutawātir qirā'āt* are recognized. *Qirā'āt* are the different linguistic, lexical, phonetic, morphological and syntactical forms permitted when reciting the Qur'an. The origin of these refinements lies in the fact that the linguistic system of the Qur'an incorporates the most familiar Arabic dialects and vernacular forms in use at the time of revelation. What is more, *qirā'at* may be seen as the pieces of a single mosaic, each fitting perfectly into the supernatural text of the Qur'anic expression. Then again, *mutawātir qirā'at* may be recited both during and independently of *ṣalāt* (prayers), while others that are not of this degree may be used only for the purposes of exegesis (Kahteran, 2006).

7. An Application of *Qirā'āt* Rules in Shihab's Exegesis

In line with the above, some scholars agree to certain rules for the interpretation of the Qur'an to ensure that one's exegesis is not deviant. Shihab as one of the exegetes in the Archipelago also applied general and specific rules in his *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, such as:

7.1 Rule: When the *qirā'āt* has been identified its meaning cannot be refused

This rule is described by al-Ḥarabī (1996). Thus, each meaning resulting from the difference in *qirā'at* should be accepted and followed in terms of knowledge or practice, and cannot be rejected for any reason (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2005). The rule was applied by Shihab when interpreting *sura al-Fātiḥah* (The Opener) verse 4 below:

Mālikiyawm al-dīn
"Sovereign of the Day of Recompense".

Shihab (2010) states two famous *qirā'āt* of this verse, namely *malik* which means king and *mālik* means owner. According to him, the verse can be read by both *qirā'āt*, because such is the Prophet's (pbuh) reading and based on narrations that determine its authenticity (*mutawātir*).³

Based on these interpretations, Shihab accepts the diversification of authentic *qirā'āt* in interpreting the above verse. This method is extremely good and supported by other great exegetes, such as Ibn Kathīr (2000) stating that either one reads *malik* or *mālik* both are included in the seven canonical authentic readings (*qirā'at al-sabʿ*) and narrated consecutively. However, the study found that Shihab is inconsistent on this issue, particularly with regard to the above rule, as in *Sura al-Nisā* '(The Women) verse 1 below:

"O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer".

Shihab (2010, vol. 2) states that the famous reading of *al-arḥām* is *fathā* (*al-arḥāma*), so that it is understood as co-ordination of the objects of *taqwā* (*maʿtūf*), means fear of God and *al-arḥām*. As known, the word *taqwā* is derived from the Arabic root (*waqā*), from which verbs are formed which signify protecting, preserving, guarding and other related ideas. *Taqwā* has the sense of protecting oneself from moral peril, preserving one's virtue and guarding oneself against the displeasure of God. Fear of Allah in connection with the *al-arḥām* is to maintain familial ties and not break such ties due to improper behaviour. If you follow the imam who reads *al-arḥām* by *kasra* (*al-arḥāmi*), this word is following the pronoun of God in utterance *bihi*, that He was mentioned of God's name. As this verse reminds us to fear Allah by His name. People also apply on behalf of their families and usually the application is submitted by saying, "By the name of God and for the sake of our family relationships." This second opinion did not reflect the views of the majority and there are weaknesses in terms of language, but also (more importantly) because it does not emphasize the need for preservation of the relationship. It was just announced that by mentioning the name of Allah, and because of the family relationship, you are loving each other. As for the first opinion, as read above, it is strictly ordered to keep the relationship which connects directly with the command to fear Allah. This meaning is consistent with the purposes of the *Sura*, as previously stated.

Based on Shihab's exegesis it can be understood that the words of *al-arḥām* in the above *surah* as two forms of *qirā'āt*. The first is the most popular *qirā'āt* who reads *al-arḥām* with *fathā* (*al-arḥāma*). This *qirā'āt* indicates as the following of objects *taqwā*. As the second *qirā'āt* is the minority which is read by *kasra*, (*al-arḥāmi*). This *qirā'āt* indicates the following of the pronouns of God in pronouncement of *bihi*. Consequently, Shihab has evaluated both by selecting the first *qirā'āt*. The reasons are that the second opinion is not the *qirā'āt* of the majority, and it is also contrary to Arabic grammar. Accordingly, this study found several things that need to be refined in Shihab's exegesis, among others:

- Shihab was citing only two differences in *qirā'āt*, though in the books of *Tafsīr* three types are mentioned. As for the third *qirā'āt* not mentioned by him is *al-arḥāmu* read in the nominative form (*marfuʿ*) ending with *ḍamma*. Among the great exegetes who mention this *qirā'āt* are al-Zamakhsharī (1998) and al-Qurṭubī (1964).
- A valuation carried out by Shihab shows his clear tendency to the first opinion. The study found that it is misplaced because the two forms of *qirā'āt* are sourced from the Prophet (pbuh). Therefore, the exegetes did not question these differences. Accordingly, Shihab was found to have differing views with other venerated exegetes such as Ibn Kathīr (2000), Abū al-Saʿūd (1994) and al-Qurṭubī (1964).

However, there is also an exegete, such as al-Ṭabarī (2001) who states that this interpretation is held by the people who read the word *al-arḥāma* by accusative form (*nasab*) ending by *fathā* (opening the vowel *a*). This means to fear Allah by using His name when you ask Him and be afraid to break the relationships. This is due to the word *al-arḥāma* was coordinated (*maʿtūf*) to the name of God, and syntactically should be accusative. Therefore, the *qirā'āt* is permitted by a reciter (*Qārī*) is in accusative form. This point clarified that the Arabs never linked the clear nouns to the articulation of pronouns (*kināyah*) while in the negative form (*majrūr*) ending by *kasra*, except in cases of emergency, like in poetry.

Based on the assessment, al-Ṭabarī tends to *qirā'āt naṣab*. He refused *qirā'āt majrūr* because the word is not fluent in accordance with the Arabs, except in emergency situations, such as in poetic texts. This is due to the difficulty in poetry, whereas in ordinary expression there is no reason to require the speaker to choose bad speech from the declension (*ʿirāb*) side. As a result of such disagreements among exegetes, the study found that to accept both *qirā'āt* is preferable. Moreover, this is affirmed by the method proposed by al-Ḥarabī (1996).

³Also see the application of this rule in Shihab's *Tafsīr* on *sura ʿāḥa* 20: 63 and *al-Zukhr* (The Ornaments of Gold) 43: 57.

Al-Shanqīṭī (1995) warns that the difference of authentic *qirā'āt* indicates that these *qirā'āt* contain different laws. In this regard, al-Qurṭubī (1964) received both *qirā'āt* and considered *al-arḥāmi* authentic based on the argument of the poem, though it is recognized as an incongruity in terms of *īrāb*, but due to an emergency situation it was permitted. In addition, al-Qurṭubī also cited al-Qushayrī's opinion stating that the scholars accept the diversity of *qirā'āt* were sourced directly from the Prophet (pbuh). Therefore, the evaluation done by Shihab when interpreting *Sura al-Nisa'* verse 1 proves that he is not consistent in using the *qirā'āt* rule.

7.2 Rule: Merging the meaning of two different *qirā'āt* is better than differentiating between both.

This rule is described by al-Ḥarabī (1996) and al-Yamanī (1986). This rule means if exegetes find differences in *qirā'āt*, it should attempt to combine both meanings. This is due to the meanings in the differences in *qirā'āt* can be consolidated (al-Samin, n.d). Hence, the rule was applied by Shihab (2010) when interpreting *sura Taha* verse 63 below:

"They said, "Indeed, these are two magicians who want to drive you out of your land with their magic and do away with your most exemplary way".

Shihab (2010, v. 7) states that *in hadhāni lasāḥirān* was debated in detail by experts and grammarians. From the perspective of *qirā'āt*, the scholars generally read *in*, as well as the word *inna*. Ibn Kathīr and Ḥafs read this word as *in*. Thus, the *qirā'āt* of the majority of scholars raises linguistic questions. Normally, *hadhāni* is governed by *inna* and should have been rendered as *hadhayni* (i.e. in the accusative). The reason for this departure from the normal rules is therefore the observance of *ḥikāya* (quoting what someone has said), regardless of the normal rules of inflection, a dialectical feature that has been used here for rhetorical effect. The statement quoted is made by sorcerers, and in sorcery, as observed even now in Arabic, sound effect is important as part of the incantation. Here, it has three successive words all with long *alif*, preceded and succeeded by *fathā* followed by *nūn*: *hadhāni, sāḥirāni, yurīdāni*, so to change *hadhāni* into *hadhayni* would break the pattern. The general grammatical rule has been suspended here for rhetorical purposes, and as in all these examples, the suspension of *īrāb* has not impaired the meaning, because other cues determine the grammatical function of the individual words. There is also a view that *inna* is absolutely the word used to emphasize the news, but not all Arabic speakers assume that *inna* could render the noun accusative. Moreover, the language is used by tribes of Kinānah and Bi al-Ḥārith ibn Ka'b in accordance with the above verse. Therefore, it is called *shādh* (it does not assessed wrong by native Arabic). It is therefore incorrect to fail to formulate the rules which include all kinds of native readings. Furthermore, Arabic grammar was formulated after the emergence of the Arabic language. Nevertheless, Abū ʿAmr is the only expert who reads according to the Arabic grammar (*inna hadhāni lasāḥirān*). However, this *qirā'āt* is not popular despite being authentic.

Based on this interpretation, it is understood that the above verse has three forms of *qirā'āt*, namely *inna hadhāni lasāḥirān*, *in hadhayni lasāḥirān* and *inna hadhayni lasāḥirān*. All of these three specified *qirā'āt* enjoyed successive levels of multiple transmissions, and to gather its meanings that was contained is acceptable and better than to differentiate between them. Hence, certain things that need to be done to improve Shihab's interpretation, among others:

- Shihab's opinion which states Ibn Kathīr and Ḥafs are the only ones who read this word by *in* is incorrect. Al-Qurṭubī (1964) mentions other names such as al-Zuhrī, al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Mufaḍḍal, Abbān, Ibn Muḥaysin and ʿĀṣim.
- Shihab's opinion stating that the verse *inna hadhāni lasāḥirān* is the language spoken by the tribes of Kinānah and Bi al-Ḥārith ibn Ka'b was only partially correct. Al-Ṭabarī (2001) mentions other names from both factions mentioned by Shihab, among others Khath'am, Zubayd and other tribes of Yemen.
- Shihab's opinion stating that Abū ʿAmr is the only expert who read *inna hadhayni lasāḥirān*, according to the linguistic method was incorrect. Al-Qurṭubī (1964) mentions names other than the one reciter mentioned by Shihab, namely ʿUthmān and ʿĀishah among the companions. Similarly, al-Ḥasan, Saʿīd ibn Jubayr and Ibrāhīm al-Nakhāʿī among the *Ṭabiʿīn*. While among the *Qurra'* is ʿĪsā ibn ʿUmar and ʿĀṣim ibn al-Jahdarī. This list was further strengthened by the opinion of ʿĀshūr (1984) stating that Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was among the fourteen reciters who read it *inna hadhayni lasāḥirān*.

In addition, this study also found that Shihab's method is inconsistent, because the above rule is not used by him when the differences of *qirā'āt* in one verse was found, where variances in meaning could be combined. An example is when Shihab interprets *Sura al-Baqarah* (The Cow) verse 222 as the following:

"And they ask you about menstruation. Say, "It is harm, so keep away from wives during menstruation. And do not

approach them until they are pure. And when they have purified themselves, then come to them from where Allah has ordained for you. Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves.”

Shihab (2010, v. 1) states that there are two readings introduced in the verse, namely *yaṭhurna* and *yataṭahharna*. The first word means pure (stop from menstruation) while the second means very pure (after the menstrual shower). The meaning contained by the second word is stronger than the first and is perhaps better and more pure.⁴

Based on these it can be understood that Shihab chose the second *qirā'at*, *yataṭahharna*. The meaning of this *qirā'at* according to him is stronger and better than the first, *yaṭhurna*, as to *yataṭahharna* is more pure. Moreover, a valuation carried out by him conflicts with Ibn al-Jazarī (n.d), who states that the two readings can be gathered in meaning despite containing different laws, namely; a woman who is menstruating is untouchable by her husband until the termination of menses or post-partum bleeding has cleared and she has been purified with the obligatory bath (*ghusl*).

Therefore, the best interpretation of *Sura Al-Baqarah* verse 222 is to advance the assembly of both *qirā'āt* based on the meanings contained by the diversity of the different *qirā'āt*. This is due to the principle that differences in meaning that can be consolidated should be consolidated.

8. Conclusion

Shihab is known as the greatest exegete in Indonesia. His passion towards the Qur'an and its exegesis were initiated by his parents which later developed while studying at Pondok Darul Hadith al-Faqihyyah. His thirst for detailed knowledge caused him to pursue his studies at the University of al-Azhar, Egypt. He obtained his Ph.D. from the same university. Shihab underwent the process of intellectual development in the said institution for almost 13 years.

Shihab stressed the importance of understanding the meaning of a verse based on a linguistic analysis so that the real message and meaning intended by that verse can be highlighted. Indeed, he was well aware of this importance, and hence he applied the rules of interpretation in his *magnum opus*, namely *Tafsir al-Mishbah*. In this regard, however, this study concludes that Shihab applied two rules of *qirā'āt* to ensure the resulting exegesis is in accordance with the requirements of Islamic law and the rules described here have been formulated, recognized and summarized by Muslim scholars and exegetes. However, there are times when his views can be refined and improved to ensure comprehensive data and facts.

Finally, since the Qur'an is the main source of all Islamic teaching and doctrine, this was the reason for the evolution of *qirā'at* as a discipline and the fact that many works were written including works on the recitation of the Qur'an in seven or ten ways. The *qirā'at* pertains to differences in linguistic, lexical, phonetic, morphological and syntactical forms that are permitted in reciting the Qur'an, and are not in any sense 'variants'. The source of these diverse refinements is the fact that the Qur'an incorporates into its linguistic system the most familiar Arabic dialects and vernacular forms in use at the time that Qur'an was revealed.

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⁴Also see the application of this rule in Shihab's *Tafsir on sura Āl-Imrān (Family of Imran) 3: 21, 115, al-Zumar (The Troops) 39: 9, and al-Ḥadīd (The Iron) 57: 13.*

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