

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Quran is the holy book of Islam that guides the life of Muslims as the servants of Allah. In pre-Islamic history, it was a norm when the Arabians embraced Christianity, Jews, Zoroaster, or even polytheism which they believed in multiple gods (A. Khan, 2013). In fact, they even worshipped the idols, stars, sun, moon, angels, spirits, and trees but some practiced the teaching of hanif which was likely the teaching of Prophet Ibrahim (Fahruddin, 2017; Hanapi, 2013; Kamis et al., 2018). Their beliefs in paganism and animism have demonstrated the uncivilised Arab nation with their idolisation towards nature.

Al-Mas'ūdī (2005) claimed that there were three categories of pre-Islamic religions which were the group of believers of God, prophethood and resurrection, the people who believed in God and resurrection but denying prophethood as well as those who only believed in God but denying prophethood and resurrection. Therefore, the Quran is sent down to Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him (PBUH) more than 1400 years ago as a blessing to all man kinds by focusing on Arabians. The violation of human moralities by the Arab nation before the age of Islam or also known as the time of ignorance (Sarhini & Maya, 2019; Sattar, 2017) is one of the main reasons why the Quran is sent down to the Arabs in their language (Siddiek, 2012). This is due to the fact that the Arabic literature tendency is to lamenting, praising, attacking, and boasting arrogance of certain tribes (Achmad, 2018) as mentioned in a hadith:

"أَرْبَعٌ فِي أُمَّتِي مِنْ أَمْرِ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ، لَا يَتْرُكُونَهَا: الْفَخْرُ فِي الْأَحْسَابِ، وَالطَّعْنُ فِي الْأَنْسَابِ، وَالْإِسْتِسْقَاءُ بِالنُّجُومِ، وَالنِّيَاحَةُ"

Among my people there are four characteristics belonging to the pre-Islamic period which they do not abandon: boasting of high rank, reviling other peoples' genealogies, seeking rain by stars, and walling. (Hadith. Muslim. Kitāb al-Janāiz: Bāb at-Tasydīd fī an-Niyāhah: Juz' 2: #934)¹

That is why the language of the Quran is specially chosen by Allah to confront the Arabic high language literacy in delivering divine messages. From time to time, the expansion of Islamic conquered territories in the era of revival has witnessed the massive Muslim converts that come from different geographical areas, skin colours, races, and languages (Hilmi, 2014). The social relations among people of Muslim societies from all parts of the world have formed diverse Arabic dialects that are nearly unintelligible (P. Webb, 2016). For example, morphological and phonetic changes with a mixture of accents from Spanish-Arabic, Iraqi-Arabic, Syriac-Arabic, and Yemeni-Arabic (Ferrando, 2016; P. Webb, 2016; P. A. Webb, 2014) have caused the emergence of various forms of communication styles.

This leads to cultural challenges and multilingualism among Muslims themselves which becomes a major challenge for Muslim scholars to educate the societies. The non-Arab Muslims are even more difficult to understand the Quran thus, proper interpretation of the Quran in the native language of the Muslims in their regional community is essential for their better understanding of Quranic messages.

¹ Muslim. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim. (trans.) Abd-al-Hamid Siddiqi. 2009. *Mokhtaser Sahih Muslim*. Riyadh: Darussalam Publishers. p. 518.

On the other hand, humans, animals, and plants coexist in this universe. Plants play a big role in the ecosystem. A part of sustainability for humans and animals' needs is depending on the balancing of plant life. Besides, Schaal (2019) highlighted that good human-plant relation contributes to good biodiversity where it is important for the stability of ecosystem functioning, biosphere protection, psychological health, culture, and satisfaction. Islam teaches its believers to love trees and plants. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

" مَا مِنْ مُسْلِمٍ يَغْرِسُ غَرْسًا، أَوْ يَزْرَعُ زَرْعًا، فَيَأْكُلُ مِنْهُ طَيْرٌ أَوْ إِنْسَانٌ أَوْ بَيْمَةٌ، إِلَّا كَانَ لَهُ بِهِ صَدَقَةٌ "

There is none amongst the Muslims who plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person or an animal eats from it, but is regarded as a charitable gift for him. (Hadith. Al-Bukhāriyy. Kitāb al-Harthu wa al-Muzāra‘ah: Bāb Faḍl az-Zar’i wa al-Gharsi Idhā Ukila Minhu: #2320)²

On top of that, paradise is also described as a garden full of trees and flowers (N. Ansari, 2011; Nasr, 2016). By figuring out the purpose of the creation of plants through the Quran, Muslims are able to understand their responsibilities towards the ecosystem properly. Motivated by the Islamic faith, Muslims work hard to explore the world of plants and consequently, many Muslim botanists appeared in the Islamic civilization such as Ibn Juljul, Ibn Samjun, Ibn Al-Wafid, al-Ghafiqi, al-Idrisi, al-Qalanisi, Ibn Sirabiyun, Ibn al-Suri, and Ibn al-Baytar (Foundation for Science Technology and Civilisation [FSTC], 2009). What is more, the Quran forbade us from harming earth as Allah says:

² Al-Bukhāriyy. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhāriyy. (trans.) M. Muhsin Khan. 2009. *Sahih Bukhari*. Riyadh: Darussalam Publishers. Vol. 3. p. 525.

﴿وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾

And do not do mischief on the earth, after it has been set in order, and invoke Him with fear and hope. Surely, Allah's mercy is (ever) near unto the good doers. (Al-Quran. Al-A'raf 7:56)³

In this research, the comparison between the methodology of interpreting plants in the Quran by Hamka and M. Quraish Shihab is approached by using Tafsir al-Azhar and Tafsir al-Misbah as the Malay Quranic interpretation books. It is also important to see the extent of the importance of plants in the Quran with human life. This is to ensure that people understand that every term in the Quran is meaningful including plants with specific purpose and effect.

1.2 Research Background

The Quran covers every inch of human needs in the aspect of this worldly life and the hereafter. In order to practice the Quranic teachings, Muslims have to understand the meanings of each verse of the Quran. The messages are probably can be understood by certain readers and not the others as the majority of Muslims are non-Arabs (Johnson & Grim, 2013; Pew Research Center, 2011, 2015). That is why Muslims require Quranic interpretations from religious scholars to understand more about Islam. Interpretation in Arabic word is known as tafsir which means reveal while in terms of Quranic interpretation, tafsir is understood as explaining the meaning of the verse, its relationship, story, and the reasons of its revelation in words

³ All Quranic translations in this writing are based on Muhammad Taqiuddin al-Hilali & Muhammad Muhsin Khan. 1984. *Translation of the Meanings of The Noble Qur'an in The English Language*. Madinah: King Fadh Complex. Translations from other sources will be cited accordingly.

that are proven with clear meaning (Al-Jurjāni, 2004). Besides, Ibn Manzur (n.d.) asserted that tafsir is revealing of what is meant or covered by complicated terms. It is then supported by Sofyan & Arifin (2015) when they stated that tafsir is to uncover, clarify, and display the aim.

In Islam, Quranic interpretation is categorised into tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr and tafsir bi al-ra'yi. Tafsir bi al-ma'thūr is the interpretation of the Quran with Quran, Quran with hadiths, Quran with the words of companions, and Quran with the words of tābi'īn (Al-Zahabi, n.d.; Al-Zurqani, n.d.). Some scholars have a different point of view on whether the interpretation of the Quran with the words of tābi'īn can be considered as tafsir bi al-ma'thūr or not. The justification from the group of scholars who agree that the interpretation of the Quran with the words of tābi'īn as part of tafsir bi al-ma'thūr is because they were the ones who were the closest to Prophet Muhammad after the companions (Muhsin, 2014). Some of the books in this classification are Tafsir aṭ-Ṭabary, Tafsir Ibn Kathīr, Ma'ālim Tanzīl, and ad-Dāruḥ Manthūr Tafsīril Ma'thūr (Siregar, 2018).

On top of that, al-Zahabi (n.d.) defined tafsir bi al-ra'yi as the interpretation that is based on the ijtihād of the scholar who is expertise in the Arabic language and knowledgeable in every aspect needed as a Quranic interpreter. This was supported by Al-Qaṭṭān (2000) that the tafsir bi al-ra'yi is the interpretation in which the interpreters explain the meaning that they understand specifically and expressing their opinions without contradicting the Shariah law and religious texts. This kind of interpretation is strongly debatable among scholars whether it is acceptable or not causing some other scholars to reject. (Muharrir, 2015). Tafsir bi al-ra'yi is also known as tafsir al-dirāyah or tafsir bi al-ma'qūl (Gafoordeen, 2017; Hakim et al., 2018; Nasution, 2018). Tafsir

al-Bayḍāwī, Tafsir al-Fakhrul Rāzi, Tafsir Abu Su'ūd, Tafsir an-Nasafy, Tafsir al-Khāzin, and Tafsir al-Jalālayn are the example of the interpretation books that are listed in this category (Gafoordeen, 2017; Suratman, 2014).

Both categories of interpretation are essential in the process of interpreting. The wise previous scholars have been formulating the rules of interpretation systematically to make sure that the Quranic verses are not misinterpreted by those who intended for a particular purpose with lust. Concerning the topic of nature in the Quran, every creation has its purpose and meaning. As Allah says:

﴿وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لَٰعِبِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾﴾

And We created not the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them, for mere play. (Al-Quran. Ad-Dukhān 44:38)

There are about 750 verses that mention the natural elements and the correlation between man and nature in the Quran (Bidin et al., 2017; Manoiu et al., 2016; Mănoiu et al., 2016). Plants are living things that exist in the universe. According to Hossain et al. (2016), a total of 121 verses related to the plant have been identified within the Quran. Meanwhile, 27 species (Hossain et al., 2016; Qamariah, 2019) with more than 14 terms regarding the plants found in the Quran (Rusdi et al., 2018). This indicates that plants play a major role in human life and benefited them much. Solehah (2017) also claimed that Allah uses plant elements as a metaphor to bring something into one's mind because the plant is a part of nature that is constantly exist around humans.

Therefore, with all the highlights on plants by Allah through the holy texts, a detail interpretation of plants is essential to understand the meaning of the divine messages. The focus on plant interpretation in the Quran based on Tafsir al-Azhar and

Tafsir al-Misbah have not been emphasised as a specific study. Besides, previous literatures have not comprehended the whole terms of plants in the Quran (AlBzour, 2017; Muhammad, 2014; Rusdi & Omar, 2019; Sheikh & Dixit, 2015). The researchers only concentrating on a few verses either some classification of plant or the number of verses related to the plant. Thus, there is a need to carry out this study from the perspective of Malay scholars based on the Malay Quranic interpretation.

1.3 Problem Statement

Many studies have been done on plants by scientists from all over the world for their benefit to humans. Previous works of literature concentrated more on therapeutic and aromatic plants (Alqethami et al., 2017; H. Khan, 2014; Marwat, Khan, Ur-Rehman, et al., 2009; Muhammad, 2014). Meanwhile, the local documentations are more likely to discuss the Quranic plants through the perspectives of linguistic and architecture (Hassan et al., 2015; Man et al., 2017; Ramli & Husin, 2015; Solehah, 2017). Above all, most of the studies of plants in the Quran were only limited to either certain types of plants or the specific names of the plants (AlBzour, 2017; M. F. M. Ariffin et al., 2015; Azhari, 2017; Sheikh & Dixit, 2015).

Ramli (2015) suggested conducting further studies to reveal other problems related to the plant terms in the Quran. Every word in the Quran has special meanings and it shows the importance of the words in building faith and confidence in Allah. Similarly, AlBzour (2017) recommended studying fruits in the Quran, which is also a part of the plants in order to enhance the knowledge that may lead to new discoveries from the Quranic language and secrets of fruits. The reference sources, particularly about the plants in the Quran are still insufficient in Malaysia (Solehah, 2017). This

limitation makes it difficult for the public to obtain reference material related to the subject. In addition, the in-depth studies on plants in the Quran are mostly pioneered by non-Muslim researchers notably from the West (Yakob et al., 2016). The responsibility to study more about the Quran should be done by Muslims to revive the glory of Islam based on the knowledge from the Quran like the previous scholars.

Meanwhile, the most prominent complete Quran interpretation in Southeast Asia are Tafsir al-Azhar and Tafsir al-Misbah because both interpretation books are in Malay (Hamka, 1990a; Shihab, 2005b). Quraish Shihab has written several other books of Quranic interpretation with various styles of interpretations but there is no specific writing on the interpretation of plants in the Quran (Shihab, 1996, 2005b) as well as Hamka (Zawiyah & Zuraidah, 2014). Moreover, based on the previous literature, there are also many studies that have been conducted on these two interpretation books, but the focus of studies on the Quranic plant interpretation is still lacking (Ahmad et al., 2017; Amir et al., 2020; Anshory, 2017; Bahar & Zabidi, 2019; Hakim et al., 2018; Hamisan@Khair et al., 2014; Has, 2016; Ibrahim & Usman, 2013b, 2013a; Kadir et al., 2014; Kasim & Muhamad, 2015; Sakat et al., 2015; Yaakob, 2012). Therefore, this research will add value of knowledge for the field of Quran interpretation regarding Tafsir al-Azhar and Tafsir al-Misbah.

Specifically, this study is aiming at the methodology used by the Indonesian scholars, which are Hamka and M. Quraish Shihab in their Quranic interpretation of plants. The reason for choosing both scholars is because they are modern Muslim scholars from the Malay Archipelago that producing complete Quranic interpretation in the Malay/Indonesian language. Thus, their explanation and ideas are more likely influenced by the social surroundings of the people in the region. The interpretation of

the terms related to plants in the Quran is quite less especially from the perspective of the Malay world. Hence, the researcher would identify and compare the methodology of Hamka and Quraish Shihab in interpreting plants in the Quran.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What is the plant-related terms mentioned in the Quran?
2. How do Hamka and M. Quraish Shihab interpret plants in the Quran?
3. Are there any similarities and differences between the methodology of Hamka and Quraish Shihab in interpreting plants in the Quran?

1.5 Research Objectives

1. To extract the terms used for plants in the Quran.
2. To analyse the interpretation of plants in the Quran stated by Hamka and M. Quraish Shihab.
3. To examine the similarities and differences between the methodology of Hamka and M. Quraish Shihab in interpreting plants in the Quran.

1.6 Significant of Research

This study plays an important role to clarify the importance of plants element in the Quran to understand the message of Allah and its relationship towards the Islamic creed. This is because the Quran is the primary source in Islam whereas its interpretation works as a bridge to understand the divine messages. The Quranic

interpretation in the Malay language is essential due to the lack of proficiency in the Arabic language among Muslims especially in Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, and Singapore. Besides, this study is intended to give the public a better understanding of the major role of nature, especially the impacts of plants on human life, as it is mentioned frequently in the Quran. Plants are not just served as food and a source of life but also as something that has values in educating the people spiritually.

1.7 Limitation of Research

121 verses related to the plant have been identified within the Quran (Hossain et al., 2016). The plant terms would be targeted for extraction while the interpretation of plants would only be discussed by themes based on the data collected. The focus of this study is to compare the methodology of interpretations by Hamka and M. Quraish Shihab about plants stated in the Quran based on Tafsir al-Azhar and Tafsir al-Misbah. This study is not confined to just specific chapters but rather it is a comprehensive study of the verses because the plant terms are scattered in various chapters of the Quran. Therefore, it is important for the researcher to examine the terms involved and then analyse them to obtain the required research findings.