Construction of the Paradigm of Islamic Universality in Maḥmūd Shaltūt's *Taqrīb Madhāhib* Project

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Abstract: This paper will discuss the universality of Islam in the thought of Maḥmūd Shaltūt. The universality of Islam is an essential topic amid a crisis in the meaning of Islam due to violent conflicts that are often in the name of Islam. As a result, Islam, which is known to have a vision of *raḥmatan li al-ʿālamīn*, is perceived as a religion that legalizes violence for the sake of group interests. Maḥmūd Shaltūt is a moderate figure who tries to define Islam in a universal, moderate, and tolerant manner. This paper will explain Maḥmūd Shaltūt's biography based on a literature study. Then, it is directed to explain Islam in the distinction between the meaning of Aqidah and Sharia, followed by explaining the construction of the paradigm of Islamic universality through Mahmud Maḥmūd Shaltūt's interpretation of the word Islam in the Qur'an. The final part will review the implementation of Maḥmūd Shaltūt's paradigm of Islamic universality in the discourse of *taqrīb madhāhib*. This paper finds that (1) the crisis in the interpretation of Islam begins with the issue of the distinction between the meaning of aqidah and sharia. (2) in Maḥmūd Shaltūt's thought, Islam's universality comes from the Qur'an's universality. (3) the universality of Islam explored through the interpretation of the Qur'an led Maḥmūd Shaltūt to an understanding of Islam in the theological and sociological realms. Based on the paradigm of Islamic universality, Maḥmūd Shaltūt implemented the principle of Islamic universality in the discourse of *taqrīb bayna madhāhib*.

Keywords: *universality, Maḥmūd Shaltūt, Taqrīb Madhāhib*

INTRODUCTION

The disease of sectarian fanaticism is still a serious problem in the lives of Muslims. Sectarian problems that arise often make the doctrine of Islam a legitimization for acts of violence and division. So, at a certain point, although Islam is conceptually and doctrinally established, in practice, it makes Islam very fragile in the realm of the subjectivity of its adherents. This problem ultimately brings Islam into a crisis of meaning as a religion that makes it difficult to answer the challenges of a multidimensional era. This is undoubtedly very worrying because Islam, for its adherents, is not only interpreted as a mere spiritual belief but also understood as a value or principle of life.

Today, the interpretation of Islam is often presented as a religion that causes conflict instead of being a spreader of peace. Violent conflicts that often take the name of Islam create the perception that Islam is a religion that legalizes violence. This can be proven by the

derivation of negative words that are often attached to Islam, such as fundamentals, radicals, and terrorists, which can be found in bombing cases that have occurred in Indonesia. (Susanto, t.t.) In addition, the tradition of fanaticism of theological groups or associated with particular schools of fiqh creates polarization that often threatens the unity and integrity of Muslims. Indeed, the polarization that takes place within Muslims today is closely related to world political developments and social and economic changes that add to the distortion of the meaning of Islam. Finally, in some groups, Islam is often interpreted by the interests of certain groups, which leads to the denial of fellow Muslims, resulting in repeated human tragedies.

The mistake of interpreting Islam above has been mentioned and studied by a moderate Muslim scholar, Maḥmūd Shaltūt. In this context, we can trace several of Maḥmūd Shaltūt's major works against the reality of sectarian fanaticism that thrives in the Islamic tradition. Strictly speaking, Maḥmūd Shaltūt strongly highlighted the practice of theological sectarian fanaticism or fiqh schools that still grow wild in the lives of Muslims without distinguishing between mainstream theological groups. Departing from this, Maḥmūd Shaltūt became a central figure in demonstrating the *taqrīb* project between madhhabs which became a severe communication trend in the 40s in supporting the unity of the ummah (*fī daʿm al-waḥdah al-ʿamāliyyah al-ummah*). In this regard, it would be interesting to know Maḥmūd Shaltūt's following statement indicating the universality of Islam: "I believed that the idea of *taqrīb* was the right way, and from the beginning, I was involved in the gathering (organization), as well as in its various activities. Later, when I was appointed as an official of Masayikh al-Azhar, I was prepared to issue fatwas on the permissibility of worshipping those schools of Islam whose foundations are solid and whose sources are known. One of them is the Shia *imamiyyah isthnā ʿashariyah school*."(Zaqzuq, 2019)

So far, the study of Maḥmūd Shaltūt's thought construction conducted by Muhammad Imarah can be critical. In *Syaikh Maḥmūd Shaltūt imām fī al-ijtihād wa al-tajdīd* Imarah explains some elements of the construction of Maḥmūd Shaltūt's thought, namely criticism of the tense, renewal, Islamic reform (*al-Iṣlah bi al-Islām*), Islamic moderatism, rationality-the mention of construction elements here is only as a sample because the author believes there will be ample space for changes or additions to other elements. (Imarah, t.t.) However, unfortunately, in this aspect, Muhammad Imarah's study, in the author's view, does not explain - not to say skipping - the universality of Islam as an essential element in the construction of Maḥmūd Shaltūt's thought. In Indonesia, the study of Maḥmūd Shaltūt's thought is minimal, let alone studies with the subject of Islamic universality. So far, the study of Maḥmūd Shaltūt's thought is more focused on the context of interpreting the Qur'an, politics, and fiqh in contemporary issues. For example, Wildan Hidayat's study entitled New Textures of Modern Tafsir: Maḥmūd Shaltūt and Non-Sectarian Thematic Reasoning in Interpreting the Qur'an which discusses Maḥmūd Shaltūt's thematic interpretation. (Hidayat, 2022) In addition, there are studies of Maḥmūd Shaltūt's thoughts on politics and the State studied by Amin Husein Nasution (Nasution, 2009) and Nasuha Abu Bakr. (Abu Bakr, 2016)

Through the review of these studies, it appears that the study of Maḥmūd Shaltūt's thought has not touched on the topic of the universality of Islam. Therefore, this paper will fill the void of one field of study in Maḥmūd Shaltūt's thought. This paper has three critical variables to be mentioned first: the paradigm of Islamic universality, moderate, and thematic interpretation. The paradigm of Islamic universality is the central topic in this paper, as can be read in the title above. At the same time, the author does not mention the other two variables for fear of obscuring the substance of this study. The two variables are interrelated because the

thematic interpretation method is a moderate method of interpreting the Qur'an often used by early-generation scholars (*salaf*) and contemporary scholars today (*Khalaf*).

Through the above, this paper aims to explain the construction of the paradigm of Islamic universality in the mind of Maḥmūd Shaltūt by observing Maḥmūd Shaltūt's interpretation of the term Islam in the Qur'an. It is then continued by reviewing the implementation of the principle of Islamic universality in Maḥmūd Shaltūt's work in the discourse of *taqrīb madhāhib*. The questions to be developed are: What is the entity of Islam in Maḥmūd Shaltūt's interpretation of the term Islam in the Qur'an? How is the paradigm of Islamic universality construction in Maḥmūd Shaltūt's thought? Moreover, how is its implementation in the discourse of *taqrīb bayna al-madāhib*?

METHOD

This paper is based on library research by tracing the term Islam in Maḥmūd Shaltūt's thought. If it is more specifically related to Islam, the object of analysis is the term Islam in the Qur'an through a thematic interpretation approach by Maḥmūd Shaltūt. In Maḥmūd Shaltūt's interpretation, the verses that explain the meaning of Islam in the Qur'an are collected in one theme and then interpreted as the meaning of Islam according to the context of the verse. The primary sources used are three works of Maḥmūd Shaltūt, namely *Min tawjihāt al-Islām, Islam 'Aqidah wa Shari'ah*, and *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-Karīm al-ajzā' al-'ashra al-ūlā*. The secondary data sources are obtained from other works of Maḥmūd Shaltūt, such as *al-qurān wa al-qitāl*, and books and journals that talk about Maḥmūd Shaltūt's thoughts, such as the work of Muhammad Imarah *al-Syaikh Maḥmūd Shaltūt al-imām fī al-ijtihād wa tajdīd*. As for data analysis, this paper uses a qualitative research approach, which is explained descriptively.

Biography of Maḥmūd Shaltūt

Maḥmūd Shaltūt was born on April 13, 1893, in Munyah Bani Mansur, Buhairah province. Maḥmūd Shaltūt's growth period as in general, Egyptian children who grew up in a strict religious environment, he has completed the memorization of the Qur'an and entered the Ma'had Iskandariyah, which is under the auspices of al-Azhar. (Imarah, t.t.) His studies were developed at all levels of al-Azhar education, from the *Ibtidaiyyah* level, *Thanawiyyah*, to obtaining a bachelor's degree in 1918. From here, it is no exaggeration to say that Maḥmūd Shaltūt has spent almost his entire life in the shade of al-Azhar.

After completing his studies in 1919, he was appointed as a lecturer at Ma'had Iskandariyyah, Maḥmūd Shaltūt's first place of formal education. That year, the Egyptian people led a revolution against the British colonialists led by the revolutionary Saad Zaghlul. In that condition, Maḥmūd Shaltūt participated directly in the revolution as a form of religious and national obligations in various ways, from physical mobilization to ink strokes. (al-Maghribi, t.t.) Egypt's deteriorating condition due to British colonialism had unwittingly formed Maḥmūd Shaltūt's revolutionary spirit at a reasonably young age. The spirit was later implemented in the renewal of al-Azhar. (Hidayat, 2022)

After completing his studies in 1919, he was appointed a lecturer at Ma'had Iskandariyyah, the first place Maḥmūd Shaltūt received formal education. That year, the Egyptian people underwent a revolution led by revolutionary Saad Zaghlul, who opposed British colonialism. In that condition, Maḥmūd Shaltūt participated directly in the revolution as a form of religious and national obligations in various ways, from physical mobilization to

ink strokes. Egypt's deteriorating condition due to British colonialism had unwittingly formed Maḥmūd Shaltūt's revolutionary spirit at a reasonably young age. The spirit was later implemented in the renewal of al-Azhar. (al-Maghribi, t.t.)

Regarding intellectual development, Maḥmūd Shaltūt was generally influenced by Muṣṭafa al-Maraghī. Al-Maraghī, from the beginning, had recognized the spirit of renewal in Maḥmūd Shaltūt's thought. This can be evidenced by al-Maraghī's extraordinary encouragement to Maḥmūd Shaltūt to stay in Cairo by serving as a lecturer at al-Azhar University. Until the peak when Muṣṭafa al-Maraghī began to implement his reform ideas in Azhar through memoranda, Maḥmūd Shaltūt became the first supporter of the reform initiative by writing various articles in political newspapers to support the memorandum project.

During the implementation process of al-Azhar reform, Maḥmūd Shaltūt had resigned from the post of al-Azhar due to the revocation of Muṣṭafa al-Marāghi's position as grand sheikh of al-Azhar by the ruling regime at the time, then the position was replaced by Sheikh Dhawāhirī. The political dynamics that forced the dismissal of al-Marāghī by the ruling regime gave birth to a revolution from within al-Azhar that Al-Azhar's scholars and students initiated. Finally, Muṣṭafa al-Marāghī was able to take back the position of the grand sheik, and Maḥmūd Shaltūt returned to being a lecturer at the Sharia Islamiyah lecture. (al-Maghribi, t.t.)

On October 13, 1958, a government decision was issued to appoint Maḥmūd Shaltūt as the highest leader of the al-Azhar institution, the grand sheikh. Maḥmūd Shaltūt then served as grand sheikh of al-Azhar until the end of his life, who died on December 13, 1963. (al-Maghribi, t.t.) As a jurist, mufassir, and sociologist, Maḥmūd Shaltūt discussed many state issues and contemporary fiqh and straightened out misunderstandings of Islam. Maḥmūd Shaltūt's works include *al-Islam 'Aqidah wa Shariah*, *min tawjihāt al-Islām*, *al-Fatāwā*, and *al-Tafsīr al-Qurān al-karīm*. (Nasution, 2009)

In the book *Hay'ah Kibār al-'Ulama'*, Zawat explained that in political attitudes, Maḥmūd Shaltūt played an essential role in consolidating al-Azhar's relationship with the Islamic world through sending da'wah delegations or receiving foreign students (wafidin). This is one of the political systems that Maḥmūd Shaltūt did through al-Azhar, and he even declared that the communist system was not against Islam as a form of political attitude. Therefore, Maḥmūd Shaltūt has a reasonably wide popularity because of the views that are considered controversial and its direction in Islamic law. (al-Maghribi, t.t.) As quoted by Amin Hussein, the expression of John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito recognizes Maḥmūd Shaltūt as a prominent Egyptian religious figure who supports Arab Socialism because Arab Socialism is by Islam. (Nasution, 2009)

Islam in the Issue of Distinguishing the Meaning of Creed and Sharia

One of Maḥmūd Shaltūt's work, al-Islam aqidah wa syariah, inspired this discussion. Meanwhile, the use of diction here is the author's interpretation to emphasize the problems contained in the meaning of Islam. The work indicates that the problem of the meaning of Islam began when the Prophet Muhammad died. Since then, scholars' understanding has varied regarding verses of the Qur'an with more than one meaning. From this condition, the realm of human thought expands, and then views and schools in the theoretical and practical realms are increasingly numerous. In summary, this makes Islam, which was initially understood as a religion that demands the commitment of its followers, into opinions and schools through understanding of the Qur'an (*al-fahm al-insānī fī al-islām laysa dinan yaltazim*). (Shaltut, 2019a)

Distortion of the meaning of Islam can affect the form of Muslim religiosity. In this context, we find two terms to explain this condition in Maḥmūd Shaltūt's other work, Min Taujihatil Islam. Maḥmūd Shaltūt uses two terms to explain groups that tend to favor one of the pillars of Islam, namely creed and sharia. Both terms are symbolic religion (*al-tadayyun al-ramzī*) and religion in formality (*al-tadayyun al-sūri*). (Shaltut, 2019b)

Symbolic religion (*al-tadayyun al-ramzī*) is a term to explain the condition of religious groups that favor the "meaning" of creed over sharia. The group only aims to get religious legality (*bi mujarrad al-intisāb ilā al-dīn*) by doing the first pillar of Islam, namely reading the two sentences of shahada. (Shaltut, 2019b) However, they do not implement Islamic law or perform good behavior reflecting Islamic values. They see truth and goodness purely based on reasoning and personal lust. In this case, Maḥmūd Shaltūt explicitly mentions that this kind of religious group is worse than declaring kafir or atheist directly so as not to cover the weakness of their minds.

On the other hand, religious formality (*al-tadayyun al-sūri*) is a term to describe religious groups that display mere physical form. This group prioritizes religious matters (sharia) in implementing Islam. In this case, Maḥmūd Shaltūt mentions concrete examples of religion in a formality, such as prayer, fasting, etc. (Shaltut, 2019b). Ironically, this group underlies religion logically (Aqidah) by doing *taklīd* to the views of their predecessors. So, for example, their creed is Asha'iryyah, not Māturidiyyah or Muktazilah, without being supported by the belief that comes from the arguments of the Qur'an. In other words, this group tends not to care or fully have a clear theological argumentation base.

Regarding this last category, modern Islamic scholar Abdullah Diraz explains it as a widespread phenomenon in the lives of Muslims. According to Diraz, this is easy to understand because Islam is semantically defined as obedience (*al-inqiyād*) either outwardly, inwardly, or both at once, before finally shifting its meaning to the aspect of implementing sharia. Diraz's basic assumption is that if a term has an empirical and logical meaning, like the word Islam, one tends to understand the empirical meaning. (Diraz, t.t.) In this regard, it is interesting to note that Diraz himself, in *Naẓarah fī al-Islām*, uses the term Islam to indicate the physical form of worship (sharia). (Diraz, 2018)

Regardless of the differences that arise from the problem above, Maḥmūd Shaltūt, through the category, aims to see the impact of the phenomenon of the way of religion above. Therefore, we can find Maḥmūd Shaltūt's argumentation that explains that the first group (symbolic religion) can easily break away from the teachings of the Qur'an and hurt the younger generation to deny their religious beliefs (*ʿaqāid al-dīnī*), they also bring influence on Islamic teachings through western perspectives. The second group (religious formality) results in diversity in the realm of worship following the territorial distribution of Muslims, so it is feared that it can lead to potential division or polarization of Muslims. (Shaltut, 2019b)

Therefore, Maḥmūd Shaltūt's study is critical to constructing the meaning of Islam by explaining the right "position" in placing the distinction between the meaning of creed and sharia. Maḥmūd Shaltūt explains that creed is the basis (*al-Aṣl*) and sharia is a branch (*al-Farʿu*). The relationship between the two is not interpreted as overlapping or mutually superior to one of the two but rather a mutually reinforcing relationship (*taʿanuq al-sharīʿah wa al-ʿaqīdah*). This relationship is inseparable from Maḥmūd Shaltūt's study of interpreting the Qur'an to produce universal Islamic values. Therefore, the following discussion will describe this last point in detail.

The Universality of Islam: The Universality of the Qur'an

Maḥmūd Shaltūt in the Islamic world is known as a tafsir expert who produces many interpretations in answering the problems of Muslims. Methodically, the study of Maḥmūd Shaltūt's interpretation can be seen from the background of the crisis he wants to answer. It is important because the crisis aspect is the foundation for developing thematic interpretation. According to the author, in general, the crisis aspect in the study of Maḥmūd Shaltūt's interpretation can be summarized in two categories such as Maḥmūd Shaltūt's lengthy explanation in the introduction to Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim al-ajza' al-'ashra al-ula. In the introduction, Maḥmūd Shaltūt explains that two camps practice destructive interpretations of the sacredness of the Qur'an: first, the group that uses the Qur'an to strengthen theological sects and differences in madhab. Second, the group that synthesizes modern findings with the interpretation of Qur'anic verses. (Shaltut, 2004)

The crisis aspect above is a strategic part of Maḥmūd Shaltūt's interpretation and opens the momentum to contextualize the thematic interpretation method. It can be seen how Maḥmūd Shaltūt emphasizes the thematic interpretation of the Qur'an by seeing the urgency of the interpretation as a method of interpreting the Qur'an. (Kharlie, 2018) In that context, it can be said that Maḥmūd Shaltūt was inspired by Muhammad Abduh's view that:(Ridha, 1947)

> There are two types of tafsir: the first is dry interpretation, which distances Muslims from Allah and His Book. This interpretation describes *lafdh* and grammatical structure and then explains the terms and signals that arise from terminological problems (*min al-nukt al-fanniyyah).* This interpretation is more like an exercise in practicing a science rather than being called tafsir. Second, the interpretation that has the status of a collective obligation for Muslims, an interpretation that has collected several conditions and can play its purpose, which is to direct the interpreter to the purpose and the wisdom of the legislation (*ḥikmah al-tashrī'ī*) in creed and law. ...... Then, the real purpose behind it all is as a guide through the Qur'an.

Departing from Muhammad Abduh's statement, Maḥmūd Shaltūt wants to make thematic interpretation ideal for interpreting the Qur'an. According to him, the method of interpretation with a grammatical approach to Arabic tends to eliminate the purposes of the Qur'an. (Hasanah, 2015) In practice, it is often found that the retraction of Qur'anic verses from their context is a justification for theological views or schools of fiqh, so it can be said that the Qur'an has changed its function from being the principal balance of Islamic teachings to a mere instrument of justification. Thematic interpretation, by collecting, analyzing, and understanding the content of the verses of the Qur'an in one theme, means that it has put the interpretation of the Qur'an in its context. In addition, thematic interpretation can also convey the intent of the Qur'an to Muslims because this method of interpretation is not only limited to theory but also touches the context of Muslims' reality. (Shaltut, 1951)

Then, related to the essence of this study, we need to look at the basic principles of Islamic universality in Maḥmūd Shaltūt's thought. Maḥmūd Shaltūt does not describe the point of Islamic universality anywhere in his book, let alone explain it entirely and separately. However, the author does find a wording in Maḥmūd Shaltūt's words that indicates the principle of universality that can be found in the Qur'an, namely: "The Prophet Muhammad has received the main source of Islam which compiles the teachings of creed and sharia, namely the Qur'an."(Shaltut, 2019a) For Maḥmūd Shaltūt, Islam is the universal religion Allah

taught to the messengers before the prophet Muhammad and sent down the book to explain it. (Shaltut, 2019b) Therefore, the statement implies that the universality of the Qur'an is a manifestation of the paradigm of Islamic universality in Maḥmūd Shaltūt's thought. The same thing was also confirmed by 'Abd al-Wahhab Khallāf, who said that all human actions have laws described in the Qur'an. (Khallaf, 2019)

Unlike most Muslim scholars who interpret Islam using a language approach, Maḥmūd Shaltūt defines Islam through the perspective or terms of the Qur'an (*taʿbīr al-Qurān*). According to Maḥmūd Shaltūt, Islam in terms of the Qur'an has two essential elements, namely the creed, which in the Qur'an is termed faith, then the sharia, which is termed good deeds (*qad ʿabbara al-qurān ʿan al-ʿaqīdah bi al-Imān wa ʿan Shariah bi al-ʿamal al-shālihah*). Through the thematic interpretation method, the verses of the Qur'an that explain the meaning of Islam are surah al-Kahf verses 107, 108; surah an-Nahl verse 97; surah al-'asr; surah al-Ahqaf verse 13. (Shaltut, 2019a) Through these verses, Maḥmūd Shaltūt interpreted briefly that Islam must consist of creed and sharia that leads humanity to goodness in all aspects of his life. However, according to the author, it is unfortunate in the context of Maḥmūd Shaltūt's interpretation that it focuses more on the doctrinal definition of Islam and does not explain Islam in detail in different contexts. Hence, it still raises questions about the assessment of a person's Islamicness in terms of his ethnic-social aspects. To some extent, the limitations of Maḥmūd Shaltūt interpretation can be understood. Maḥmūd Shaltūt's method of thematic interpretation is done by discussing letter by letter and then summarizing it with the central theme in the letter, as in *al-Tafsīr al-Qurān al-Karīm*. (Yamani, 2015) So that Shaltūt does not explain one subject verse by verse in the Qur'an, Shaltūt defines Islam by collecting verses that explain the meaning of Islam, not the term Islam contained in the Qur'an and then interpreted.

Apart from the limitations of Shaltūt's interpretation above, the results of his interpretation of Islam, which means religion by paying attention to the two dimensions between creed and sharia, have at least led to the spirit of Islamic universality in two important matters, namely the value of equality (*al-musāwah*) and theological and social implications. In the context of equality, the value of equality in Islamic universality here must be understood by Islamic doctrine. That is, equality is a recommendation to implement Islam to humanity in faith and sharia without distinguishing gender, skin color, or social class. In a more specific context, Islam also guarantees the equality of every responsibility of women and men from a religious perspective. Women or men are equally burdened with the creed, encouraging them to do righteous deeds. (Shaltut, 2019b) More than that, Maḥmūd Shaltūt is well aware that the theological and social dimensions are the problem areas of Muslims. Through this awareness, the implications of theology occupy a central realm in changing the social perspective of Muslims. So, it is not surprising if we find the theological implications that he explains are different from the views of Muslims in general.

Maḥmūd Shaltūt mentions this theological implication in one of his books with a theme that is quite interesting, namely about the dividing line between Islam and kafir (*al-ḥad al-faṣl bayna al-Islām wa al-kufr*). In that case, he explained that theological consequences in the realm of belief, for example, if someone does not believe in the existence or oneness of Allah, and does not believe in the message that Allah sent down to his creatures, or does not believe in the book of Allah and so on. Then, he is not called a Muslim, and the Muslim law does not apply to him. In other words, he is not necessarily a disbeliever in the sight of Allah, but he does not apply Islamic law in the world. (Shaltut, 2019b) According to Maḥmūd Shaltūt, the ruling of disbelief in the sight of Allah depends on one's denial of all or part of the Islamic beliefs - and that is after the teachings of Islam have been conveyed correctly. If the Islamic

teachings are not conveyed or conveyed incorrectly, or in other cases, if the teachings are conveyed correctly, but he (the recipient of the teachings) does not have the capability of thinking (laisa min ahli al-nadr). He does not accept the message conveyed and is in the process of thinking to find the truth of it; then, in that condition, he is not a kafir who deserves to go to hell. (Shaltut, 2019b)

Through the theological interpretation above, Maḥmūd Shaltūt opens up ample space for the growth of tolerance and humanity in the social attitude of Muslims. (Hitami, 2020) The term kafir, which is attached to non-Muslim communities, can cause a significant religious crisis. The negative stigma also resulted in the division of Muslims due to differences in theological sects or schools of fiqh. So, the character of Islamic Universality emphasizes the value of global and comprehensive pre-humanity. (Ulva et al., 2021) In this context, the relevance of Maḥmūd Shaltūt's Islamic Universality thought today in dealing with sectarian disease amid Muslim societies with great hopes for peace can be recognized. Another exciting thing, which is essential to note, is that Maḥmūd Shaltūt's Islamic universality thinking is implemented in the forum for peace between madhhabs, which has become a trend of Islamic unity, namely the *taqrīb* project between madhhabs.

The Universality of Islam in the Taqrībb Project

The principle of Islamic universality in Maḥmūd Shaltūt's thought is, in turn, implemented in the discourse of *taqrīb bayna madhāhib*. The discourse was based on a theoretical-historical background and gave birth to several religious practices. Historically, the primary motivation for the emergence of the *taqrīb* project is inseparable from the socio-political background in Egypt at the time of Maḥmūd Shaltūt. Maḥmūd Ḥamdī Zaqzūq explained that the primary motivation for the *taqrīb* project was the unity of Muslims. We can easily understand this because Maḥmūd Shaltūt lived during the British colonial period in Egypt. Egypt's poor socio-political conditions encouraged the emergence of the *taqrīb* movement, sponsored by the idea of Islamic renewal. (Zaqzuq, 2019) In Muhammad Imarah's argument, the establishment of the *taqrīb* institution aimed to harmonize Suni-Shia and eliminate violence due to the Suni-Shia conflict, which was often used by colonials to ignite the emotions of Muslims and weaken all elements of the nation and sects of Muslims. (Imarah, t.t.)

With this kind of motivational background, the discourse of *taqrīb* has a theoretical basis in the language of Maḥmūd Shaltūt himself: "The call for *taqrīb* is the call for tawhid and unity (*da'wah al-tawḥīd wa al-waḥdah*), and it is the mission of Islam and the mission of peace." .... I describe an idea of freedom of correct madhhab by Islam. (Imarah, t.t.) This expression also reveals that Maḥmūd Shaltūt wants an idea of freedom of madhab that is correct based on the Islamic perspective. The idea of freedom of madhab must be interpreted as a madhab that is free from fanaticism and ignorance in understanding the teachings of Islam, which has been a source of conflict for Muslims.

It cannot be denied that the ideology of the Islamic school of thought has long been firmly embedded in the minds and minds of Muslims. Therefore, it is the first fact that Maḥmūd Shaltūt's *taqrīb* discourse must overcome it by encouraging Muslims to the teachings of Islamic universality with all forms of expression, such as tolerance, prioritizing human values and efforts to understand each other in differences. Therefore, in the context of sectarian fanaticism faced by Muslims, Maḥmūd Ḥamdī Zaqzūq criticizes that it is necessary to uproot the dark sectarian history from ourselves (read: Islam) and rebuild trust between Islamic schools. So, the way is open for Muslims to unite cooperation in the fields of economics and politics and revive the civilization of Muslims to maintain Islamic identity. (Zaqzuq, 2019)

In the realm of praxis, the *taqrīb* project was realized by forming a united group of Islamic madhhabs, or *Jamaah al-Taqrīb bayna al-madhāhib al-Islāmiyyah* in Arabic. Maḥmūd Ḥamdī Zaqzūq said that this group was formed in the mid-20th century and was filled by many scholars of al-Azhar, including Abd al-Majīd Sulaym, Muṣṭafa al-Marāghī, Muṣṭafa Abd al-Rāziq, Maḥmūd Shaltūt. At the same time, members of the Shia sect are Ayatollah al-Barujrudi, an Imamiya Shia cleric, Muḥammad Taqiy al-dīn al-Qūmī, and Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī. (Imarah, t.t.)

As a result, through the perspective of Islamic universality, the group can formally bridge the communication between Suni and Shia. Even the result that is felt until today is the scientific development in the realm of Jurisprudence law-making in the al-Azhar installation. In the 60s, Majlis al-'Alā li syu'ūn al-Islāmiyyah published an encyclopedia of Islamic jurisprudence (*mausū'ah al-fiqh al-Islamiyyah*) consisting of 29 juz and containing about 8 schools of jurisprudence namely, four Sunni schools: Shafi'i, Hanafi, Maliki, Hambali, plus four others from the Shia schools: the Ja'fari, Zaidi, Ibadi, and Dhahiri schools. (Zaqzuq, 2019) All of this is inseparable from Maḥmūd Shaltūt's argument of the universality of Islam, that:

"Islam does not oblige anyone to follow a particular madhhab, but every Muslim has the right to follow the correct madhhab....The Ja'fariyah madhhab, known as the imamiyyah Shia madhhab, is shared permissibly as a madhhab of worship, as are all the madhhabs of Sunni. Muslims should be aware of this."(Imarah, t.t.)

According to Maḥmūd Ḥamdī Zaqzūq, Muslims did not start from space to continue the project of *taqrīb* between madhhabs. (Zaqzuq, 2019) The discourse of *taqrīb* between Islamic madhhabs carried out by Maḥmūd Shaltūt has provided a road map to build relationships between madhhabs in the Islamic world to restore the glory of Islam. The paradigm of Islamic universality, more specifically, the universality of the Qur'an, must be the essential foundation for realizing the progress of Islam and creating an attitude of tolerance, moderation, and universality as a valid Islamic entity instead of Islam, which is full of violence and creates divisions. In the expression of Jalāl al-dīn Raḥmat, as quoted by Amin Hussein, Shaltūt is a tremendous Islamic figure who is very concerned about the division of Muslims. Most of his life is dedicated to bringing various madhhabs closer together through the movement of religious organizations and publishing *Risālah al-Islām* magazine Madhhabs Islam. (Nasution, 2009)

CONCLUSION

This paper finds that the meaning of Islam in Maḥmūd Shaltūt's thought comes from the interpretation of the Qur'an. According to Maḥmūd Shaltūt, faithful Islam has two essential elements, namely the creed which in the Qur'an is termed faith, then the sharia which is termed good deeds (*qad 'abbara al-qurān 'an al-'aqīdah bi al-Imān wa 'an Shariah bi al-'amāl al-shalīhah*). The meaning of Islam is obtained by interpreting the Qur'an with thematic methods, namely by collecting Qur'anic verses that represent the meaning of Islam; these verses are surah al-Kahf verses 107, 108; surah an-Nahl verse 97; surah al-'asr; surah al-Ahqaf verse 13.

With the results of his interpretation of Islam, Maḥmūd Shaltūt then constructs the paradigm of Islamic universality and then relates it to theological and social implications, and implements it in the discourse of *taqrīb bayna madhāhib*. In short, Maḥmūd Shaltūt, through the perspective of Islamic universality, can implement his universal idea in the project of *taqrīb* between madhhabs as a way to unite Muslims. Unfortunately, in that aspect, according to the

author, Maḥmūd Shaltūt does not explain the meaning of Islam in detail, so it still raises questions about a person's Islamicity judged by his ethno-social.

For the author, if it can be said as an advantage, this study attempts to formulate the term universality of the Qur'an as a manifestation of the paradigm of Islamic universality in Maḥmūd Shaltūt's thought. This study is new in terms of reading Maḥmūd Shaltūt's thought. However, of course, this study still needs further deepening, especially related to the implementation of the universality of Islam in the container of Maḥmūd Shaltūt's movement, namely *taqrīb* between madhhabs. Regarding the last point, it is necessary to extract data or historical archives in the movement of the *taqrīb* project between madhhabs that developed during the Maḥmūd Shaltūt period; of course, it can be a study for the next reviewer to make this study more comprehensive in seeing Shaltūt's actions in implementing the paradigm of Islamic universality in the discourse of *taqrīb bayna madhāhib*.

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