Asbāb al-Nuzūl and The Rules of Interpretation: Some Notes on M. Quraish Shihab’s Views

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Abstract:
An analysis of the popularity and respectability of the exegetical sub-genre asbāb al-nuzūl (occasions of revelation) in the Qur’an is usually regarded to be considered under the category of Qur’anic sciences, which is an intersection between exegesis and narration. With the tool of asbāb al-nuzūl, the exegetes obtain a structural rule that lets them supervise the verse. Furthermore, because of the problems attended upon taking a strictly historical view of asbāb al-nuzūl, Muslim scholars sometimes interpret an asbāb al-nuzūl to mean not an actual historical event, but any situation to which given Qur’anic verses might have application. Therefore, this study aims to hunt a detailed inspection of the rule of interpretation, which is related to asbāb al-nuzūl applied by M. Quraish Shihab (b. 1944), who was a prolific Indonesian exegete and his published works continue to exert a strong influence. Therefore, to arise a reasonably effortless question: what are the rules contracted to fulfill? When one knows about the asbāb al-nuzūl, it is still to be decided whether the revelation has a specific implication for the particular occasion it was connected with, or whether it is of a general implication and needs to be applied by Muslims at all times. In this vein, by applying a document with an analytical approach, this article found two rules that were related to asbāb al-nuzūl used by Shihab to ensure that the resulting exegesis was following the requirements of Islamic law. Both of these rules emphasise that the most authentic and preferable rule according to majority of the scholars, which is the ruling should be derived based on the generality of the text and not on the particularity of the reason.

Keywords: Asbāb al-nuzūl, Rule of Interpretation, Tafsir Al-Mishbah, M. Quraish Shihab, Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION
The expansion of the interpretation’s rules was done by fellow scholars since the early emergence of the Qur’anic sciences, even the birth of various religious disciples in reality is supported by the motivation to understand the Qur’anic verses (Campanini, 2005). Some of the classic scholars discussed the rules of interpretation, including Burhān al-Dīn...
al-Zarkashi (d. 794/1391), who wrote *al-Burhān fī Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, and one of the most prolific Arab writers of the Middle Ages, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) with *al-Iqtān fī Ulūm al-Qur'ān*. Nonetheless, the studies on this subject were long acknowledged before the two scholars were. The rule of interpretation in the Arabic language is a combination of two words, namely: *qawā'id* (rules) and *al-tafsīr* (exegeesis). *Qawā'id* is the plural of *qā'idah* (rule or principle) and it means the foundation of something (al-Azharī, 1964; Ibn Manṣūr, 2008). This is where the saying, *qawā'id al-bayt* (the foundation of the house) is derived from. Therefore, these are the principles and foundations that assist one in understanding the Qur'ān. This is because understanding the Qur'ān is one of the three reasons (to worship Allah by reciting it, to understand its meaning, and to act according to it) for which it was revealed (al-Uthaymîn, 2009). Moreover, it was defined to be pillars for everything above it (al-Kâfâwî 1998) whereas some scholars defined it to either be a foundation or pillars analogous to a building, or to carry the meaning of something thorough in nature, which encompasses every part (Muṣṭafâ, et al. 1960). Therefore, regarding the rule terminology, neither is defined to be a general summary that encompasses the whole parts (al-Fâyûmî, 1990) nor as a general stipulation by which provisions associated with the details were known (al-Sâbt, 2001).

According to a renowned Muslim scholar of the Arabic language, literary theorist, and grammarian, ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Mūhammad al-Jurjānî (d. 471/1078) and an Arabic lexicographer, Mūhammad Ibn Ya’qūb al-Fārizābādī (d. 817/1414), the definition of *al-tafsīr* from the aspect of language is explaining something and making it clearer and more distinct or uncovering something hidden (al-Jurjānî, 1985; al-Fārizābādī, 1986; Wansbroug, 1968). However, in terms of terminology, al-Zarkashi (2008) defined it to be a set of knowledge employed to have the best understanding of the Qur’ān that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), by clarifying its meaning, extracting rulings of Islamic law, and wisdom contained in it with the aid of linguistics, Arabic grammar, Principles of Jurisprudence, occasions of the revelation, as well as the abrogation and abrogated. Based on these definitions, the rule of interpretation is a universal set of rules, used by exegetes to be a guideline to reach the study of the meanings of the Qur’ān and knowing the procedures to get its pearls of wisdom (Abdul Kadîr, Usman, Išak, Išmail, & Mohd Saad, 2020). According to Shihab (2011), Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1327) is the pioneer of this science who produced the book of *Munaddimah Uṣul al-Tafsīr*. This was then followed by Muḥammad al-Kāfiyyâ (d. 879/1474) who wrote *al-Taṣīr fī Qawā'id Ilm al-Tafsīr*. The writings after then have since expanded with the introduction of several works, among which include: *al-Qawā'id al-Ḥisān fī Taṣīr al-Qur'ān* by ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Ṣādî (d. 1376/1956), *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr wa Qawā'idahu* by Khālid ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-‘Āk, *Qawā'idal-Taṣīr Inda al-Maṣjīdirin* by Ḥusayn al-Ḥāraḥī in the year 1996, *Qawā'id al-Tafsīr: Jam'an wa Dirāsah* by Khālid Ḥumām al-Sâbt in the year 2001, *Makhîth fi Ulīm al-Qur'ān* by Mannā al-Qāṭṭān, and in the introduction of *Maḥṣūs al-Ta'wil* by Muḥammad Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī (d. 1332/1914).

However, the rules that were clarified by the scholars were not found to be similar in concept. Al-Ṣādî (1999) an eminent exegete of *Taṣīr al-Karīm al-Rahmān fī Taṣīr Kālam al-Manmâin*, for example, was inclined to expand the rule in general by some religious understandings, such as Islamic law and theology. Meanwhile, al-Suyūṭî (1996), al-Qāṭṭān (1992), and al-Sâbt (2001) elaborated on this further. Other than that, the attitudes and views of some scholars on the interpretation’s rules are somewhat different. Some
opinionate that the rule is binding and must be followed by other exegetes. Some have an opposing view about it, other than it serving to be a guideline for any exegete. In this case, there is another view that the exegesis is an effort that is always evolving (Boland, Newman & Pentland, 2010), at par with social, knowledge, language development, etc. Therefore, the rules of interpretation can be measured to be a working guideline. As far as this is concerned, the rule does not force other exegetes to use the same guidelines, however, all exegetes have the right to use a different guideline by leaning on the methodological framework assigned (Mohamad et al., 2015). In other words, the rules of interpretation are very important to be a guideline to exegetes for exegeses produced to be objective, academic and can be held accountable. Currently, people have a false interest in these sciences and they are not very interested in having the true knowledge of them. The reprochers become helpless to remove these falsehoods. This will be done with an explanation and clarification of occasions of revelation (asbāb al-nuzūl). Asbāb al-nuzūl, therefore, was seen to be related directly to the applicability of a verse rather than being a narrative device within that interpretation being embedded (Rippin, 2013). Understanding the Qur’anic provisions required a comprehensive understanding of asbāb al-nuzūl (Zahraa, 2000), it is necessary and more suitable to get true knowledge of the Qur’an (al-Wāhidī, 1969).

Shihab was born in the South Sulawesi city of Rappang on 16th February 1944. He graduated from the Department of Theology, University of al-Azhar Cairo, Egypt, because he majored in Qur’anic exegesis and prophetic tradition as well as obtaining muntaż ma’a marṭabaḥ al-sharaf al-ūlā grade (an exemplary scholar with outstanding performance) in 1982. His outstanding results qualified him to be the first Southeast Asian student to obtain a Ph.D. degree in Qur’anic sciences from al-Azhar University (Sakat et al, 2015; Shihab, 2011). The process of intellectual growth underwent by Shihab for 13 years at the University of al-Azhar shaped his form of thought. In addition, he also became known to be a religious figure and educator in Indonesia (Ikhwan, 2015). Shihab’s magnum opus in exegetical work is Tafsir Al-Mishbah, which stands alongside dozens of his other books. This book is perceived to be the latest Qur’anic exegesis produced by a Muslim scholar from the Archipelago. It is a complete exegesis, consisting of 30 parts and 15 volumes. It was written when he was the Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to Egypt and was completed after four years. It began in Cairo on Friday, 18th June 1999 and was finished in Jakarta on Friday, 5th September 2003, with approximately seven hours per day spent working on the book. It was printed for the first time in November 2000, starting from volume 1 to 10 (Ibrahim & Usman, 2013). Therefore, in this vein, by applying a document with an analytical approach, this article focuses on studying the rules of interpretation employed by M. Quraish Shihab (Shihab is used in place of his full name) in his Tafsir Al-Mishbah, which relates with the asbāb al-nuzūl of which it is included in substantial discussions in the Qur’anic sciences.

DISCUSSION
Occasions of Revelation: Revisited

The Qur’an is a source of many scientific disciplines, which interrelates and highlights the richness of an Islamic scholarship (Saeed, 2005). This matter can be seen from a strong correlation between the rules of interpretation as formulated by scholars with their profound understanding of the knowledge tools, such as the sciences of the Qur’an.
Among the fragment of this science is asbāb al-nuzūl. Alternatively stated, the scholars who formulated a method also indicate their scholarliness in this science.

Asbāb al-nuzūl is something that became a reason for the revelation of a verse or several verses, in response to questions that were the causes of revelation, or to be an explanation that was revealed at the time of occurrence of an event (Ṣāliḥ, 1988). A Saudi Islamic scholar, Mānna‘ al-Qaṭṭān (1992) defines it with what was revealed by the Qur‘an to explain its legal position at the time it occurred, such as an event or question. Based on these definitions, it can be understood that the definition of asbāb al-nuzūl contains two things: (1) The answer to the question of the Prophet about Islamic jurisprudence or to be a detailed description about religion, it was revealed that one or a few verses had a connection with the issues. (2) The decline in the Qur‘an because of the occurrence of an event.

According to a Canadian scholar of Islam, Andrew Rippin (1950-2016), the sabab is the constant reminder of God and is the ‘rope’ that is one of the understood meanings of sabab in the Qur‘an, by which human contemplation of the Qur‘an may ascend to the highest levels, even while dealing with mundane aspects of the text. The major literary exegetical role that the sabab plays, however, is what could be called a ‘haggadically exegetical’ function. Regardless of the genre of exegesis in which the sabab is found, its function is to provide a narrative account in which the basic exegesis of the verse may be embodied. The standard interpretational techniques of incorporating glosses, masoretic clarification (e.g., with variants), narrative expansion, and most importantly, a contextual definition that is predominate within the structure of the sabab (Rippin, 1988).


The asbāb al-nuzūl plays a significant role in the century and a half following the death of Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) in terms of their exegetical function, at the time when the production of discrete and specialised commentaries on the Qur‘an was encouraged. Moreover, this important function of asbāb al-nuzūl collections did not cease once the
production of specialised Qur’anic commentaries commenced but continued throughout the centuries in all corners of the Islamic world (Riddell, 2001). Therefore, these classical scholars’ works in the field of Qur’anic studies seem to be an invaluable asset of Islamic heritage and provide tough guidance for the exegetes after their era. They constitute of the component elements, such as asbāb al-nuzūl, which is the expected hallmark of traditional Qur’anic interpretation (McAuliffe, 1988). Asbāb al-nuzūl, which must be known and taken into account because they determine the meaning of the text (Shepard, 1996). Any paradigms that ignore the asbāb al-nuzūl aspect certainly will not be successfully applied in daily life (Cooke, 2000), because a logical approach of Islamic feminists (Bartkowski & Read, 2003) and Liberal Islam Network (Jaringan Islam Liberal/JIL), or so-called objectionable rational exegesis (al-tafsir bi al-ra’yi al-mazmūn).

JII activists courageously interpret the Qur’an without being grounded on rules and conditions that were established by the exegetes. One of their efforts is applying a hermeneutic approach to reinterpret Islamic law with the principle of public interest (maṣlaḥa) and objectives of the shari‘ah (maqāṣid shari‘ah). According to their eyes, the implementation of Islamic law today is no longer relevant and even violates human welfare. As a result, they offered a new rule of interpretation for substituting the well-known rule that was used by scholars since the first. The rule was offered to be al-‘ibrab bi al-maqāṣid lā bi al-alfāẓ (the principle of understanding the verse being based on a benefit not exclusive for the wording of the verses) to replace the existing rule, al-‘ibrab bi ‘umūm al-alfāẓ lā bi khabīṣ al-sabab (the decisive point is derived from the literal wording, not from the causes) (Ghazali et al., 2009).

The excellence of the maqāṣid shari‘ah philosophy and modernity of rules’ interpretation leads JII activists to criticise Islamic family law, preventing divorce imposed by a husband, banning polygamy, allowing Muslim women to marry non-Muslims, and equating the heirs of men and women, etc. on behalf of preserving public interests to be the main purpose of legislation (Ali, 2005). They conclude it possible to change hudūd law (penal code) and the other Islamic legal systems, which were clearly defined by the texts of the Qur’an. With such enthusiasm, they claim not to demolish the legislation, but wanted to keep maqāṣid and its substance without being bound by formal shape. They are quite satisfied with the maqāṣid concept, which tends to justify all secular legislation. In other words, everything can be justified on behalf of maqāṣid shari‘ah (Usman et al., 2015).

From this perspective, Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (b. 1926), the prolific Islamic thinker, criticises these kinds of groups by stating that despite the importance of considering asbāb al-nuzūl on specific causes, it does not mean to be excessive in this matter as currently done by most people. In fact, among them were limited in Qur’anic words that were on a general note within the meaning of that as was in the days of prophethood. This matter, therefore, can not be accepted under any conditions and conflicts with the generality of the Qur’an, regarding either place or time (al-Qaraḍāwī, 2001). Additionally, the verses have to be understood – after due attention to grammar and parsing-by reference to the ‘where’ and ‘when’ in the sequences of Muhammad’s experience as both a ‘messenger’ and ‘ruler’. Frequently, this juncture of where and when actually determines the very content of the verse (Cragg, 1999).
Application of The Occasions of Revelation in Exegesis: Review on Shihab’s Experience

Despite the neglect that *asbāb al-nuzūl* suffered as a discipline, its significance is evident from the frequency of the claim that no assistance is greater in understanding the Qur’an than knowledge of when as well as in what circumstances its verse was revealed (Burton, 1977). Concerning this function, Shihab emphasised the importance of interpreting the Qur’an based on it. This indication could be explained within the application of the rules’ interpretation, which relates to this notion in his commentary, and some rules are as follows:

**Rules of Asbāb al-Nuzūl**

First, the rule: “*The decisive point is derived from the literal wording, not from the causes*. This rule means if an exegete finds the context of Qur’anic verses, which its discussion is specific to an event and associated with a law, that provision is not limited to that event only but applies generally. This matter was referring to any event that has similarities with the event that became an occasion of revelation. al-Ša’dī (1999) stated that whatever was described by exegetes about *asbāb al-nuzūl*, is essentially to be one of the tools that explain the meaning of Qur’anic words. However, the scope is not limited to the occasions of revelation of the verses. Therefore, if it says, “*This verse was revealed about the events of thus and so*” it means the event is a part of the intended meaning of the verse, but it also covers some other meaning that it contains. To understand this meaning, it could be proved that the Qur’an was revealed to be a guidance to every generation (from the beginning until the Day of Resurrection), in addition to every place and situation. Therefore, al-Šābūnī (1970) emphasises that although scholars differ on whether an expression is seen by the pronunciation of generality or specificity of reasons, the majority of them tend to be the above rule.

Al-Suyūṭī (1996) also supports this rule due to the verses that were revealed regarding specific occasions, but by general agreement, the force of the verses in question goes beyond the original occasions. Moreover, the imperative is to follow the wording, not the occasion (Mourad, 2013). From this perspective, Ibn Taymiyyah, a prominent Syrian thinker, reminds although there is disagreement on whether or not the general wording that is used for a specific occasion of revelation is restricted in its applicability to that particular occasion, no one ever said that the general provisions of the Qur’an and *Sunna* were specific to the category to which that person belongs and that their general applicability does not derive from the wording as such. A verse for which there was a particular occasion of revelation, if it contains a command or a prohibition, it applies both to the person first intended and to all those who are comparable to him. Similarly, if it contains praise or blame, it embraces both that person and all who share in his qualities (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1971).

Shihab, for example, applied the above rule when interpreting *sura al-Hājj* (The Pilgrimage) verse 4 below:

> It was decreed for every devil that whoever turns to him - he will misguide him and will lead him to the punishment of the Blāzē.

Shihab (2010) states that some scholars, such as al-Suyūṭī (2003) mentioned the name of al-Nadar ibn al-Ḥārith to be a figure of Pagans whom this verse meant. Indeed, al-
Nadar was recognized to be very defiant and harassing of the teachings of Islam. Generally, however, if its context is looked at, then it includes a lot of people since the days of the Prophet Muhammad, such as Abū Jahl, Ubay ibn Khalaf, and others. It also similarly includes the heads of the rebellious in the present and the future, because time will not be spared from those who denied religious teachings without being based on authentic knowledge. See also Shihab’s exegesis that applied this rule on *sura al-Baqarah* 2: 44 & 114, *al-Nisa* 4: 75 & 104, *al-Mā’idah* 5: 2, 11 & 33, *Ṭāba* 20: 132, *Fussilat* 41: 24, *al-Layl* 92: 17 and *al-‘Ā‘alq* 96: 10.

Based on Shihab’s interpretation above, it could be understood that al-Nadar ibn al-Ḥārith was the figure meant by *sura al-Hajj* verse 4. Nevertheless, the context of the verse was in a general nature, then it includes more people, such as Abū Jahl, Ubay ibn Khalaf and others. Likewise, it includes the rebellious leaders today and in the future. Therefore, the basic understanding of this verse was based on the text, which is general in meaning and not specific to the case that was being the cause of its revelation. To further strengthen the application of this rule in *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, the interpretation of *sura al-Mā’idah* (The Table Spread) verse 33 could be seen:

*Indeed, the penalty for those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and strive upon earth [to cause] corruption is none but that they be killed or crucified or that their hands and feet be cut off from opposite sides or that they be exiled from the land. That is for them a disgrace in this world, and for them in the Hereafter is a great punishment.*

Shihab (2010) states that this verse was revealed regarding the case of the al-‘Urayniyyin tribe, but because the wording is in a general nature, and following the rules of interpretation, ‘the decisive point is derived from the literal wording, not from the causes.’ The literal wording intended is, *yuḥāribūnallāh wa rasūlahu* (those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger).

Therefore, the main focus of the above rule is the verse, which its wording has the generality of (*laff lahu ‘umnīm*). While the verse revealed to certain persons has no generality in its wording (*āyah nazalat fi mu‘ayyan wa la ‘umnīm lilaff‘izāh*), then the verse is solely devoted to those who were revealed to them only. In this regard, it is interesting to note here that Shihab’s interpretation, which was related to *asbāb al-nuzūl* in another place contradicts to venerated scholars, such as al-Suyūṭī, in *sura al-Layl* (The Night) on verses 17 and 18 below:

*But the righteous one will avoid it. [He] who gives [from] his wealth to purify himself.*

Shihab (2010) states that some scholars see these verses to specifically discuss Abū Bakr, but a more accurate opinion is putting generalisation in meaning, including all of the people involved, and performing what is described by the verses above. Surely one of the most important is Abū Bakr, who uses his entire fortune to support the Prophet and the importance of missionary endeavor. Also see Ibn Kathīr (d. 793/1373), an expert on tafsīr in his Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm that fortified Shihab’s exegesis of *sura al-Layl*, verses 17 and 18 (Ibn Kathīr, 2000).

Al-Suyūṭī (1996) argues that supposing the verse to be general in meaning, some people believed that it can be extended to cover anyone who acts as Abū Bakr acted, in conformity with a rule. They are mistaken because nothing in the wording of this verse implies generality. The *alif-lām* conveys generality only when it precedes a relative pronoun.
(ism al-mawṣūl) or a definite noun (ism al-ma'rīfah) in the plural (some would add, a definite noun in the singular, on condition that the article is not used to indicate previous knowledge). Furthermore, the alif-lām in al-atqā (the righteous) is not a relative pronoun, because as was universally agreed, a relative clause cannot be introduced by an elative. Al-atqā is also not plural, it is a singular noun, and used with it is a definite article that indicates previous knowledge. Because the relative paradigm af'āl always conveys distinctness and serves to separate from others, the one it designates in his possession of certain qualities, the view that this verse is general in meaning is, therefore, false, and the opposite view – that it is specific – is definitely correct. Its meaning is restricted to the one concerning whom it was revealed, namely Abū Bakr.

Based on these different perspectives, this study found al-Suyūṭī’s arguments to be more powerful. He did not only argue with the rule of interpretation but also strengthened his view based on analysis of Arabic grammar. Therefore, the wording, al-atqā, which is a superlative that indicates to someone specific, rather than generally. Therefore, these verses should be understood to refer to Abū Bakr, although a general lesson can be learned from his great example of selflessness (Philips, 2005).

In addition, al-Suyūṭī’s opinions were also supported by al-Rāzī (1981), which states the most important and most righteous man after the Prophet is Abū Bakr. In fact, al-Suyūṭī’s view was consensus to the majority of scholars (al-Qurṭubī, 1964; al-Qaṭṭān, 1992; al-Zarqānī, 1992; al-Zamakhshari, 1998). Therefore, in applying the above rule, it needs to be identified to be a verse that does not contain elements of generality, as well as whether it was revealed to a specific person or not. If the wording indicates generality, then, therefore, the rule could be applied.

Second, the rule: “Asbāb al-Nuzūl is not limited to events occurring before its (Āyah) revelation, but includes all the events that could be covered by the content of the verse either before or after, as long as it is in the period of Qur’anic revelation”. This rule was also mentioned by Khalid al-Sabt (2001), an author of a great book in the rule of interpretation field, Qawā'id al-Tafsīr, who emphasises the revelation of Qur’an sometimes simultaneously with the designation of law, and sometimes, a stipulation of law already exists before the revelation, (and vice versa), sometimes it occurred after the revelation. An example of this rule is when Shihab (2010) interprets sura al-Ṣaf verse 4 below:

Indeed, Allah loves those who fight in His cause in a row as though they are a [single] structure joined firmly.

Shihab (2010) noted that in the introduction to this sura al-Tirmidhī’s narration regarding this verse was presented, which could be considered to be critical to those who pledge to strive but refuse to do so. Ibn Kathīr in his commentary argues that the majority of scholars say that this verse was revealed when the Muslims expect a jihād (struggle) command prescribed for them, but when God obliges, they do not implement it. Therefore, this verse as in sura al-Baqarah verse 246, discusses the Jews that were hoping to be permitted to fight, but when the war was compulsory for them, they turned back except for a few of them. Another narration states the above verse was revealed to be a criticism of those who say, “We have killed the enemy, stabbed, beat and do this and that”, but they do not. Therefore, this verse also condemned the hypocrites who said, shahādah and claimed to be Muslim without properly implementing the teachings of Islam. If you see the continuation of the verse that discusses the war, it was presumably revealed in connection with the
attitude of some Muslims who refused to fight but previously expressed a desire to do what is preferred by Allah. However, all narrations can be accommodated its contents by the above verse due to scholars applying asbāb al-nuzūl not only to events that occurred before the revelation but also to events that were able to be covered by the content of the verse, whether it happened before or after the decline of the verse, during the period of Qur’anic revelation. (See also Shihab’s exegesis that applied this rule in sura al-Mā’idah 5: 101).

Based on this interpretation, it could be remarked that the above verse was assessed to be criticism addressed to those who promise to struggle, but declined to do so, such as in al-Tirmidhī narration, which concerns of asbāb al-nuzūl in this verse and was quoted by Shihab as well as also being put forward by Ibn Kathir (2000). In addition, asbāb al-nuzūl of the above verse is also linked by Shihab to sura al-Baqarah verse 246, which discusses the Jews for the same reason. All aforementioned narrations were acceptable, due to the application of asbāb al-nuzūl not limited to events occurring before its revelation, but included all the events that were able to be covered by the content of the verse, either before or after, while still in decline in the Qur’an, and this is shown by the above rule.

Therefore, the guiding principle to be followed when interpreting or applying the verses of the Qur’an is that the lesson lies in the general meaning of the words and not simply in the special circumstances in which they were revealed. However, knowledge of the events surrounding the revelations puts the general meaning of the verses in proper context and prevents deviation (Philips, 2005). Furthermore, the verses can now be judged according to a chronology of Muhammad’s career, even if the Qur’an itself does not follow any chronological order (Reynolds, 2010).

CONCLUSION
The branch of Qur’anic sciences concerned with the asbāb al-nuzūl is one of the most important areas of knowledge for a proper understanding and explanation of the Qur’anic revelation. Asbāb al-nuzūl is a tool limited to the consideration of immediate events, which aroused the revelation of a particular verse. Where the Qur’an avoided specific references to particular people, times, and places particularly, the asbāb al-nuzūl serves to better explicate certain verses.

This study found two rules that were related to asbāb al-nuzūl used by Shihab to ensure that the resulting exegesis was following the requirements of Islamic law. Both of these rules emphasise that the most authentic and preferable rule according to majority of the scholars, which is the ruling should be derived based on the generality of the text and not on the particularity of the reason. Moreover, it was also clear that the ruling did not apply to the person who asked a question, but to everyone who encounters the same situation. Furthermore, both rules employed by Shihab indeed were recognised and considered by other Muslim scholars and exegetes.

REFERENCES


Asbab Al-Nuzul ... 55-66 (Usman, Avivy & Ravi)

