

MINANGKABAU CULTURAL IMPRINTS IN HAMKA'S TAFSĪR AL-AZHAR: CONTEXTUALIZING THE QUR'AN THROUGH CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Article history: Received: April 20, 2025 | Revised: August 15, 2025 | Available online: September 30, 2025

How to cite this article: Izzan, Ahmad, Mohammad Irfan Farraz Haecal, and Nadya Fitri. "Minangkabau Cultural Imprints in Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar*: Contextualizing the Qur'an through Critical Discourse Analysis." *Islamica: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 20, no. 1 (2025): 76-95. DOI: [10.15642/islamica.2025.20.1.76-95](https://doi.org/10.15642/islamica.2025.20.1.76-95).

Abstract: This study explores how Minangkabau literary and cultural elements shaped Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah's *Tafsir al-Azhar*, particularly in the interpretation of al-Baqarah. Employing qualitative content analysis combined with Norman Fairclough's critical discourse framework, the research examines the interplay between text production, reception, and socio-cultural context in Hamka's exegetical method. The findings reveal that literary device—such as *pantun*, proverbs, metaphors, and maxims—serve as key interpretive tools, enriching the text's aesthetic and cultural resonance. Equally significant are the Minangkabau influences, including local language, social traditions, and political references, which root Qur'anic interpretation in lived experience. This synthesis demonstrates Hamka's capacity to integrate Islamic revelation with the cultural-linguistic heritage of the Malay-Indonesian world. The study argues that *Tafsir al-Azhar* transcends local boundaries, positioning itself within the global discourse of modern Qur'anic exegesis. Hamka's approach bridges classical interpretive traditions and contemporary cultural realities, highlighting the importance of contextual hermeneutics in making the Qur'an accessible across diverse communities. Ultimately, the study offers a model for culturally grounded *tafsir* and provides a foundation for comparative analysis with other modern commentators.

Keywords: Literature; Culture; Minangkabau; *Tafsir al-Azhar*.

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Introduction

Tafsir (Qur'anic exegesis) refers to the systematic explanation and interpretation of Qur'anic verses. It involves analyzing words, phrases, and sentences in the context of classical Arabic, as well as examining the historical and cultural circumstances surrounding revelation.¹ Through *tafsir*, scholars seek to uncover the layers of meaning within the Qur'an and to clarify its guidance for human life. Although each *mufasir* (exegete) approaches the text from a distinct intellectual and methodological standpoint, all share a common aim: to make the Qur'an comprehensible and applicable to the realities of everyday experience.²

Throughout Islamic history, *tafsir* has developed in response to the passage of time and the diversity of contexts in which the Qur'an has been interpreted. From the earliest generations of Muslims to the modern era, exegetes have operated within changing linguistic, intellectual, and socio-cultural environments.³ These contextual differences have shaped not only the interpretive outcomes but also the methodological orientations of *tafsir* works. As a result, the tradition of Qur'anic interpretation exhibits a wide variety of styles, reflecting the particular historical and personal circumstances of each *mufasir*.⁴

In addition to temporal and situational factors, the development of *tafsir* has been profoundly influenced by the growth of auxiliary sciences such as linguistics, semantics, hermeneutics, sociology, and anthropology.⁵ These disciplines provide interpretive tools that help exegetes engage with the Qur'an in ways that are responsive to the intellectual and social challenges of their times. Conse-

¹ Ahmad Izzan and Mohammad Irfan Farraz Haecal, "Local Wisdom in Malay Natural Interpretation "Turjuman Al-Mustafid": Analysis of Surah Al-Baqarah with a Historical Approach," *Al-Bayan* 22, no. 2 (2024): 216-38.

² Otong Sulaeman, "Estetika Resepsi Dan Intertekstualitas: Perspektif Ilmu Sastra Terhadap Tafsir al-Qur'an," *Tanzil: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an* 1, no. 1 (2015): 13.

³ Muhammad Ainun Najib, "Epistemologi Tasawuf Modern Hamka," *Jurnal Dinamika Penelitian: Media Komunikasi Sosial Keagamaan* 18, no. 2 (2018): 303-24.

⁴ Ahmad Zainal Abidin, Thariqul Aziz, and Dewi Charisun Chayati, "Beberapa Isu Teologi dan Syariah dalam Perspektif Islam dan Agama Samawi Lainnya: Studi Kasus Pemikiran M. Quraish Shihab," *Jurnal of Quran and Hadits Studies* 9, no. 2 (2020): 55-83.

⁵ Saiful Amin Ghofur, *Mozaik Mufasir Al-Qur'an; Dari Klasik Hingga Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: Kaukaba, 2013).

quently, new interpretive approaches continually emerge, each shaped by the local cultural contexts in which exegetical works are produced.

Such contextual influences—often described as *external factors*—refer to the elements outside the Qur’anic text that affect the interpreter’s understanding. They include the *mufassir*’s socio-cultural background, political environment, intellectual orientation, and disciplinary expertise. A scholar’s worldview, educational formation, and historical consciousness inevitably leave their imprint on how Qur’anic meanings are articulated and represented.⁶

Within the Malay-Indonesian world (Nusantara), a rich corpus of *tafsir* literature has developed, reflecting this dynamic interplay between revelation and local culture.⁷ These works employ diverse languages, including Arabic, Malay, Javanese, and Sundanese, demonstrating the adaptability of Qur’anic interpretation across linguistic boundaries. According to the archives of the National Library of Indonesia, hundreds of classical Arabic manuscripts have been preserved—among them twenty-one *tafsir* manuscripts characterized by an *adabi ijtimā’i* (literary-social) style. One of the most prominent is *Tafsir al-Azhar* by Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, widely known as Hamka, whose work exemplifies the synthesis of Islamic scholarship and local cultural expression.⁸

Hamka was one of Indonesia’s most prominent Muslim scholars, writers, and public intellectuals. His intellectual contributions span theology, literature, and social thought, making him a central figure in the development of modern Islamic scholarship in Indonesia. Among his many works, *Tafsir al-Azhar* stands out for its clarity, accessibility, and cultural depth. The text’s use of simple yet elegant language, vivid illustrations, and regional expressions makes it

⁶ Mohammad Irfan Farraz Haecal, “Dakwah Rahmat li al-Alamin as Solutive Da’wah: A Study of Tafsir Science with the Approach of Sharah Hadith,” *Ar-Raniry: International Journal of Islamic Studies* 9, no. 2 (2022): 102-19; <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20181103182540-32-343764/ustaz-abdul-somad-bahas>.

⁷ Mohammad Irfan Farraz Haecal, Hidayatul Fikra, and Wahyudin Darmalaksana, “Analisis Fenomena Childfree di Masyarakat: Studi Takhrij dan Syarah Hadis dengan Pendekatan Hukum Islam,” *The 2nd Conference on Ushuluddin Studies* 8 (2022), 73-92.

⁸ Lukmanul Hakim, Lisna Sandora, and Yulniza, “Dari Minangkabau untuk Dunia Islam: Melacak Pemikiran Hamka Sebagai Sejarawan Islam,” *Majalah Ilmiah Tabuah: Ta’limat, Budaya, Agama dan Humaniora* 24, no. 1 (2020): 25-38.

both intellectually engaging and aesthetically pleasing. Hamka's integration of literary elements (*sastra*) and regional perspectives offers a distinctive approach to Qur'anic interpretation—one that resonates deeply with local readers while remaining faithful to Islamic orthodoxy.⁹

To contextualize *Tafsir al-Azhar*, a brief review of relevant literature highlights the significant role of culture in shaping Qur'anic interpretation. Ahmad Izzan and Mohammad Irfan Farraz Haecal demonstrate that a *mufassir's* social, geographical, and political environment informs the production of *tafsir*, as illustrated in *Turjuman al-Mustafid*, a foundational sixteenth-century work.¹⁰ Similarly, Khairul Huda notes that Islam's arrival in the Malay world interacted with rich local traditions, shaping the distinctive character of Malay Islam in regions such as Sumatra.¹¹ Building on these insights, Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar* exemplifies a culturally grounded approach, combining his expertise in Qur'anic sciences with deep knowledge of Minangkabau literature and culture, resulting in a unique exegetical style that integrates religious interpretation with literary and regional sensibilities and preserves the Malay-Indonesian intellectual heritage.

While previous research emphasizes the influence of historical, social, and geographical contexts on *tafsir*, a gap remains in examining how local literary traditions function as integral components of the exegetical process. Unlike Izzan and Haecal, who focus primarily on historical-cultural settings, or Huda, who examines Malay Islam broadly, these studies do not directly address the role of Minangkabau literature in shaping interpretive strategies. This research addresses that gap by critically analyzing the intersection between literary expression and Qur'anic interpretation in Hamka's work. This study will investigate the uniqueness of Minangkabau lit-

⁹ Mohammad Irfan Farraz Haecal, "The Meaning of Al-Hikmah in the Tafsir of Surah Luqman Verse 12: A Comparative Analysis Study of Tafsir Nusantara by Bisri Mustafa and Quraish Shihab," *Fokus: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman dan Kemasyarakatan* 8, no. 1 (2023): 27-38.

¹⁰ Ahmad Izzan and Mohammad Irfan Farraz Haecal, "Local Wisdom in Malay Natural Interpretation *Turjuman al-Mustafid*: Analysis of Surah Al-Baqarah with a Historical Approach," *Al-Bayan: Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* (2024): 216-238.

¹¹ Khairul Huda, "Islam Melayu dalam Pusaran Sejarah: Sebuah Transformasi Kebudayaan Melayu Nusantara," *Toleransi: Media Komunikasi Umat Beragama* 8, no. 1 (2016): 78-96.

erary and cultural elements in *Tafsir al-Azhar*. This focus emphasizes both the literary dimension and the socio-cultural embeddedness of Hamka's exegetical practice.

The research employs a qualitative design, utilizing content analysis complemented by Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis framework.¹² Data sources include primary and secondary materials. The primary source is Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar*, while secondary sources consist of journal articles, books, and relevant documents that support the analysis. Data collection follows a library research model, and content analysis procedures involve systematic data reduction, organization, and synthesis to draw meaningful conclusions.¹³

Applying Fairclough's framework, the study engages with three interrelated dimensions. At the textual level, the analysis examines Hamka's linguistic strategies, rhetorical devices, and literary expressions in interpreting Sūrah al-Baqarah. At the discursive practice level, it explores the interaction between Hamka's interpretations and existing *tafsir* traditions, highlighting the incorporation of Minangkabau literary heritage. At the socio-cultural practice level, the research situates *Tafsir al-Azhar* within the broader Malay and Minangkabau contexts, demonstrating how social, historical, and cultural dynamics both shape and are reinforced by Hamka's interpretive choices. This three-dimensional approach ensures that Fairclough's critical discourse analysis is applied systematically, providing both theoretical grounding and empirical insight.

Hamka and *Tafsir al-Azhar*

Hamka was born on February 16, 1908, in Sungai Batang, a *nagari* located on the shores of Lake Maninjau in the Tanjung Raya sub-district, Agam Regency, West Sumatra, Indonesia.¹⁴ He was the

¹² W. Darmalaksana, "Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Studi Pustaka dan Studi Lapangan" (Pre-print Digital library UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2020).

¹³ Ahmad Rijali, *Analisis Data Kualitatif* (Banjarasin: UIN Antasari Banjarasin, 2018), 81-95.

¹⁴ Y. Syafrina, "Fase Dalam Gerakan Pembaharuan Islam di Minangkabau: Dari Reformis ke Modernis," *Jurnal Tamaddun: Jurnal Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Islam*, 9, no. 2 (2021).

first child of H. Abdul Karim Amrullah and Syafiyah.¹⁵ The name “Hamka” is derived from his full name, Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, while “Buya” is a traditional Minangkabau honorific, originating from the Arabic *abi* or *abunya*, meaning “my father” or a title for a highly respected person.¹⁶ Hamka’s birth brought great joy to his family; his father reportedly said: “*Dalam kurun waktu 10 tahun Hamka akan dibawa ke Mekah untuk belajar, dan suatu hari ia akan menjadi seperti saya. Akan menjadi seorang yang saleh, seperti kakek dan neneknya pada masa lalu*” (Within ten years, Hamka will be taken to Mecca to study, and one day he will be like me. He will be a pious man, like his grandparents in the past).¹⁷

Hamka’s intellectual contributions as a scholar, writer, and social activist earned him wide recognition. He received honorary doctorates from Al-Azhar University, Cairo, and the National University of Malaysia, and a professorship from Moestopo University, Jakarta. In honor of his achievements, Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. Hamka University in Jakarta bears his name. Hamka is also listed among Indonesian National Heroes. He passed away on Friday, July 24, 1981 (14 Ramadan 1402 H) at the age of 73.¹⁸

Throughout his intellectual journey, Hamka produced numerous works spanning literature, religion, and social commentary. His notable publications include *Under the Protection of the Kaaba* (1938), *The Sinking of the Van Der Wijck Ship* (1938), *Religion and Women* (1939), and *Tafsir al-Azhar*, among many others (Masyarakat, 1982).

¹⁵ Rahmi Nur Fitri, “Hamka Sebagai Sejarawan: Kajian Metodologi Sejarah Terhadap Karya Hamka,” *Fuadina: Jurnal Kajian Keagamaan dan Kemasyarakatan* 4, no. 1 (2022).

¹⁶ Yosi Trisa, Agus Suprijono, and M Jacky, “Kearifan Lokal Budaya Minang ‘Di Mana Bumi Dipijak, Di Situ Langit Dijunjung’ dalam Konteks Pedagogi: Kasus Perantau Minang di Kota Surabaya,” *Jurnal of Education Teknologi and Innovation (JETI)* 1, no. 2 (2018), 62-85; St. Aisyah Abbas and Nur Rahma Asnawi, “Sejarah Perkembangan Pendidikan Islam di Sumatera (Suatu Kajian terhadap Tokoh dan Lembaganya),” *Ash-Shababab: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Studi Islam* 6, no. 1 (2020): 1115.

¹⁷ A. Husaini and B. G. Setiawan, *Pemikiran dan Perjuangan M. Natsir dan Hamka dalam Pendidikan* (Jakarta: Gema Insani, 2020).

¹⁸ Haidar Musyafa, *Jalan Cinta Buya: Buku Kedua dari Dwiologi HAMKA* (Jakarta: Mizan, 2017).

These works reflect his extensive knowledge and multifaceted expertise.¹⁹

Hamka's motivation for writing *Tafsir al-Azhar* was both intellectual and social. First, he observed a rising enthusiasm among young Muslims in Indonesia, particularly in Malay-speaking regions, to understand the Qur'an. Many, however, lacked proficiency in Arabic, limiting access to classical exegetical works. Hamka considered this an urgent challenge: while the youth's religious zeal was strong, their direction was unclear. As he expressed in the introduction to his *tafsir*, "*rumah telah kelibatan, jalan ke sana tidak tahu*" (the house has been seen, but the way there is unknown). His goal was to make Qur'anic knowledge accessible in a language and style familiar to Indonesian readers.²⁰

The second reason was related to the needs of preachers (*da'i*) and religious educators. Hamka noticed that many preachers faced difficulties in delivering sermons effectively because of their limited mastery of Arabic and formal religious sciences. This linguistic and intellectual barrier often resulted in restricted or awkward communication during *da'wah*. Recognizing that Indonesia's increasingly educated society required articulate and informed preachers, Hamka wrote *Tafsir al-Azhar* as a practical resource to aid them in explaining the Qur'an clearly and contextually to the public.²¹

Taken together, these motivations reflect Hamka's broader vision of a dynamic and contextualized Islamic scholarship. *Tafsir al-Azhar* responds to the evolving intellectual and spiritual needs of Indonesian Muslims by offering a model of interpretation rooted in cultural familiarity and social relevance. Through this work, Hamka sought to bridge the gap between classical Arabic exegesis and the lived realities of the Malay-Indonesian world, ensuring that the Qur'an remains a guiding text for a rapidly developing and diversifying Muslim community.²²

¹⁹ Asif Trisnani, Muhammad Thoriquil Islam, and Elit Ave Hidayatullah, "Hamka's Philosophy of Hikmah in Tafsir Al-Azhar: Addressing the Crisis of Adab in Muslim Societies," *Islamica: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 19, no. 2 (March 8, 2025): 296-320.

²⁰ Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, *Tafsir al-Azhar* (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1982), 4.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Mohammad Irfan Farraz Haecal and Dadan Rusmana, "Historical Conception According to the Natural Malay Tafsir of Turjuman Al-Mustafad: A Tafsir Study

Considering these motivations and the growing complexity of societal religious needs, *Tafsir al-Azhar* serves as a key reference for guiding readers in addressing contemporary issues within a developing community. Hamka presents the material using an interpretive style carefully adapted to the intellectual and cultural context of the Malay-Indonesian community, ensuring that Qur'anic teachings are accessible and relevant.

Tafsir al-Azhar combines *tafsir bi al-ma'thūr* (transmitted interpretation) and *tafsir bi al-ra'y* (rational interpretation), integrating multiple approaches including linguistic analysis, historical context, socio-cultural interactions, geographical considerations, and local community narratives to support its exegetical objectives. Hamka employs the *tablīlī* (analytical) method, maintaining the sequence of surahs and verses as arranged in the Qur'an, from al-Fāṭiḥah to al-Nās.²³

Although *Tafsir al-Azhar* emphasizes a socio-cultural (*adab ijtimā'i*) style, it does not exclude discussions on *fiqh*, Sufism, science, philosophy, or other disciplines. Legal and doctrinal discussions are primarily oriented toward clarifying the meaning of the verses in order to achieve the main objective: conveying practical and beneficial Qur'anic guidance for daily life.

Literature and Culture in *Tafsir al-Azhar*

The Pantun

Observing the literary elements in *Tafsir al-Azhar* clearly demonstrates Hamka's proficiency in literature, which significantly influences his exegetical work. Hamka draws on his literary expertise to enrich his *tafsir*, embedding purpose, meaning, and values within the language, proverbs, and literary forms he employs. Among these literary tools, the use of *pantun* is particularly notable.

With his literary background, Hamka frequently interprets the Qur'an through *pantun*, a traditional Minangkabau form of poetry. *Pantun* consists of four lines following an a-b-a-b rhyme scheme, with each line containing four to eight syllables; the first and third lines are interconnected, as are the second and fourth. Traditionally,

of The Nusantara," *Al-Risalah: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah Dan Hukum* 22, no. 1 (2022): 78-92.

²³ Anas Mujahiddin and Muti'ah Mardhiyyah, "Analisis Karakter Muslih dalam al-Qur'an," *Al Mubafidz: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* 3, no. 1 (2023).

pantun is used to convey messages, stories, or expressions of emotion. Within Minangkabau culture, *pantun* is prevalent not only in poetry but also in *kaba*, *pasambaban*, traditional speeches, and *dendang*, reflecting the community's rich artistic heritage. Hamka incorporates this rhyming tradition into his interpretation, as seen in verses such as al-Baqarah [2]: 29, 176, and 265.²⁴

In Minangkabau culture, *pantun* is widely practiced and highly appreciated. Beyond its presence in poetry, *pantun* also features prominently in *kaba*, *pasambaban*, traditional speeches, and *dendang*, reflecting the community's rich artistic heritage. Hamka carried forward this rhyming tradition in his *Tafsir al-Azhar*, employing *pantun* when interpreting several Qur'anic verses. Notably, in Surah al-Baqarah, he uses rhymes to elucidate verses such as al-Baqarah [2]: 29, 176, and 265, demonstrating how Minangkabau literary forms inform his exegetical style.²⁵

However, Hamka's use of *pantun* is not merely a stylistic embellishment; it serves as an exegetical strategy that bridges scriptural meaning with cultural familiarity. By employing *pantun*, Hamka contextualizes Qur'anic teachings within a form deeply rooted in Minangkabau tradition, thereby enhancing both accessibility and resonance for his readers. This approach carries theological significance, demonstrating that divine messages can be conveyed through local cultural idioms without diminishing their universality. Moreover, Hamka's incorporation of *pantun* in verses such as al-Baqarah [2]: 29, 176, and 265 illustrates how he embeds ethical and spiritual lessons into a form traditionally associated with moral instruction, reinforcing the Qur'an's guidance through culturally grounded literary devices.

The Petatab

According to traditional experts, proverbs (*pepatab*) serve as the legal and ethical foundation for Minangkabau customs, guiding all actions across various aspects of community life, including economic, socio-cultural, political, and defense matters. Understanding a proverb requires the ability to interpret its implied meaning. Simi-

²⁴ Juni Ahyar, *Apa Itu Sastra Jenis Jenis Karya Sastra dan Bagaimanakah Cara Menulis dan Mengapresiasi Sastra* (Yogyakarta: CV Budi Utama, 2019).

²⁵ Amrullah, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, 151.

larly, in his *Tafsir al-Azhar*, Hamka employs proverbs to interpret Qur'anic verses, as seen in al-Baqarah [2]: 24, 25, and 141, integrating local wisdom into his exegetical approach.

Parables

A parable is a type of figurative language that explains a concept by comparing it to something else, making the idea easier to understand. Parables are commonly used in stories, narratives, or inspirational accounts to convey moral lessons and clarify situations or events. Similarly, in his *Tafsir al-Azhar*, Hamka employs parables to facilitate readers' understanding of Qur'anic verses. For instance, he uses this literary device in al-Baqarah [2]: 171 and al-Baqarah [2]: 216, integrating narrative elements to enhance comprehension and convey ethical and spiritual lessons.

The Pameo

A *pameo* (or thimble) is a type of literary expression that conveys meaning through ridicule, satire, or cautionary advice. Common examples in the community include sayings such as “shame to ask the wrong question” or “live reluctantly, die unwillingly.” In his *Tafsir al-Azhar*, Hamka employs *pameo* as a literary device to interpret Qur'anic verses, notably in al-Baqarah [2]: 96 and 205, using culturally familiar expressions to convey ethical and spiritual lessons. These literary aspects reflect the broader cultural context, as they draw on the customs, social habits, history, and values of the community, integrating surface-level cultural knowledge with deeper exegetical insights.

The Budaya Alam Minangkabau

The influence of the Minangkabau language is evident in *Tafsir al-Azhar*. Although Hamka wrote the *tafsir* in Indonesian, his daily use of Minangkabau, his upbringing, and his experiences in the Minangkabau region shaped his linguistic choices. As a result, elements of Minangkabau language appear throughout the commentary, reflecting his cultural and regional background. This influence is particularly noticeable in al-Baqarah, for example in al-Baqarah [2]: 36 and 178-179.

Culture refers to a set of values, norms, beliefs, traditions, and practices shared by a group of people. It encompasses everything a society learns, transmits, and lives by across generations. Culture is therefore essential in shaping individual and collective identity, influencing how people think, behave, and interact.²⁶ In the context of Minangkabau society, cultural aspects include the values, norms, beliefs, traditions, and practices specific to the Minangkabau people. Hamka incorporates these cultural elements into his *Tafsir al-Azhar*, as seen in his interpretations of al-Baqarah [2]: 65 and 219, demonstrating how local culture informs his exegetical approach.

Politics

The political context in *Tafsir al-Azhar* is reflected in Hamka's discussion of Qur'anic verses in light of Indonesia's post-independence revolutionary era, addressing issues of power and the use of proverbs that convey teachings, advice, satire, and the spirit of striving for ideals. This perspective is informed by Hamka's own historical and political experiences while writing the *tafsir*, as well as by the influence of Islam on his ideological framework. The post-independence period, particularly under the leadership of Soekarno and later Soeharto during the era of Guided Democracy, shaped Hamka's enthusiasm and commitment to an Islamic Indonesia and an Islam adapted to Indonesian society. This political dimension is notably reflected in his interpretation of al-Baqarah [2]: 251.

Minangkabau Literary-Cultural Context in *Tafsir al-Baqarah*

Hamka's interpretation of al-Baqarah demonstrates a sophisticated integration of literary, cultural, and political dimensions, reflecting both the universality of the Qur'an and its relevance to local contexts. By employing literary forms such as *pantun*, proverbs, parables, aphorisms, and cultural idioms, Hamka conveys profound insights while grounding them in Minangkabau cultural heritage and the socio-political realities of Indonesia. His method illustrates how Qur'anic exegesis can simultaneously address universal theological

²⁶ Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, *Perjuangan Budaya dan Pengalaman Pribadi Selama di Balai Pustaka* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1992).

principles and local experiential contexts, making the text accessible and meaningful to his audience.²⁷

In comparison to earlier Malay *tafsir* works, such as *Tafsir Tarjuman al-Mustafid* by 'Abd al-Rauf al-Singkili, which reflected local culture in a more classical and impersonal style, Hamka's approach is notably distinctive.²⁸ He infuses local idioms not merely as cultural ornaments but as hermeneutical tools that facilitate comprehension and ethical reflection. Furthermore, his approach diverges from modern reformist commentators like Muhammad Abduh, whose rationalist *Tafsir al-Manar* shaped Egyptian discourse through universal reasoning; Hamka, instead, roots his exegesis in vernacular literature, ensuring its accessibility to lay Muslim readers in Indonesia and bridging the gap between scholarly knowledge and everyday understanding.

The use of *pantun* exemplifies Hamka's strategy of contextualizing Qur'anic teachings through familiar literary forms.²⁹ In al-Baqarah [2]: 29, a *pantun* about the futility of measuring the sea with a short line underscores the limitations of human knowledge and the supremacy of divine wisdom. Similarly, in verse 176, a *pantun* comparing copper and gold illustrates the futility of human disputes over divine revelation, emphasizing that the Qur'an's truth remains unchallenged by human quarrels. In verse 265, a *pantun* about barren soil conveys that sincere charity nurtures the spiritual life of believers, whereas neglecting faith results in spiritual barrenness, irrespective of outward appearances. Through these literary devices, Hamka embeds ethical and spiritual lessons within culturally resonant forms, demonstrating a critical, contextually grounded approach to Qur'anic interpretation.

Hamka's creative strategy resembles the way Javanese Muslim scholars employed local metaphors in *Serat Centhini*, yet his work remains distinct in framing *pantun* not as folklore but as a theological

²⁷ Syafruddin Faizin and Sri Chalida, "Representasi Local Wisdom dalam Tafsir al-Azhar," *Rausyan Fikr: Jurnal Ilmu Studi Ushuluddin dan Filsafat* 18, no. 1 (2023): 1-20.

²⁸ Ida Novita dan Halimatussa'diyah, "Kearifan Lokal dalam Tafsir Tarjuman Al-Mustafid Karya Abdul Rauf al-Singkili," *Al Burhan: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu dan Pengembangan Budaya Al-Qur'an* 1, no. 1 (2023); Suarni, "Karakteristik Tafsir Tarjuman Al-Mustafid," *Substantia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 17, no. 2 (2021): 159-166.

²⁹ Husnul Hidayati, "Metodologi Tafsir Kontekstual Al-Azhar Karya Buya Hamka," *el-Umdah* 1, no. 1 (2018): 1-15.

medium. This approach demonstrates Hamka's innovative ability to merge faith with familiar literary aesthetics while maintaining doctrinal depth, allowing Qur'anic teachings to resonate within the cultural imagination of Minangkabau and broader Indonesian society.

Proverbs constitute another significant literary device in Hamka's exegetical method. In al-Baqarah [2]: 24, the proverb about porridge and water illustrates the impossibility of rivaling the Qur'an in either linguistic form or meaning, encouraging humility and sincere submission. In al-Baqarah [2]: 25, a proverb highlighting the inevitability of flaws contrasts earthly spouses, who possess both strengths and weaknesses, with heavenly companions, who are pure and faultless. Similarly, in al-Baqarah [2]: 141, Hamka interprets a proverb about youth to critique those who boast of ancestral glory without personal achievement, warning against stagnation in communities that cling solely to the past. Unlike South Asian *tafsir* works, which often use proverbs to underscore juridical lessons, Hamka employs them at a cultural-symbolic level, embedding moral critique within familiar idioms and fostering a socially conscious Muslim identity in Indonesia.

Parables in Hamka's *tafsir* further connect Qur'anic teachings with broader human experiences. In al-Baqarah [2]: 171, he interprets the comparison of disbelievers to those who call upon beings that cannot hear as a critique of blind imitation in religion, condemning unreflective adherence to authority as a sign of intellectual stagnation. In al-Baqarah [2]: 216, Hamka compares war to the consumption of bitter medicine, acknowledging its unpleasantness yet emphasizing that it may be necessary to preserve justice and communal well-being. These interpretations illustrate Hamka's view that such obligations are not merely legal commands but also strategic instruments for cultural survival and ethical governance.

Hamka's contextualization parallels modernist exegesis in Southeast Asia but differs in consistently embedding analogies drawn from everyday Minangkabau experience rather than relying solely on abstract reasoning.³⁰ This approach grounds his theological reflections in the lived realities and struggles of his community,

³⁰ Anwar Mujahidin, Muhammad Shohibul Itmam, and Ahmad Choirul Rofiq, "The Dynamic of Contextualization in Indonesian Qur'anic Tafsirs: A Comparative Study of Tafsir Al-Azhar and Tafsir Al-Mishbāh on The Story of The Prophet Moses," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 25, no. 2 (2023): 225-250.

making the Qur'anic message immediately relevant and culturally resonant.

Aphorisms in Hamka's exegesis reveal both spiritual insights and subtle social critiques. In al-Baqarah [2]: 96, he presents life as merely a postponement of defeat, emphasizing that worldly attachment and fear of death undermine the true meaning of existence, and that a long life devoid of good deeds adds neither value nor virtue but merely increases sin. In al-Baqarah [2]: 205, Hamka examines the word *tawallā*, which can signify both turning away and assuming authority, using it to critique political leadership in his own time. Though he refrains from naming individuals, his commentary clearly alludes to the failures of Indonesia's rulers during the Old Order, highlighting poverty, hunger, and broken infrastructure as consequences of misgovernance while criticizing leaders who glorify themselves at the expense of the people.

This subtle political undertone distinguishes Hamka from earlier Nusantara *tafsīr*, which generally avoided direct critiques of rulers. By employing aphorisms, he masks critique in culturally familiar and resonant terms, enabling his commentary to be both bold and socially acceptable within his socio-political milieu.

Cultural aspects of Hamka's *tafsīr* are equally significant, particularly his use of the Minangkabau language. In al-Baqarah [2]: 36, he interprets *langkanas*, meaning deceiver or inciter, as a reference to Satan, reflecting how his Minangkabau heritage informs his exegetical style. In al-Baqarah [2]: 178 and 179, he employs expressions such as *cakak berbelah* and *merasailah* to emphasize social realities of conflict and suffering. These terms resonate with Minangkabau experiences of division and oppression, which Hamka links to colonial domination, drawing on his personal experiences of imprisonment and acute awareness of societal imbalances between oppressors and the oppressed.

Unlike other *tafsīr* works in the Malay tradition, which often relied heavily on formal Arabic expressions, Hamka deliberately incorporates Minangkabau vocabulary to make his exegesis more accessible and emotionally resonant for local readers. This conscious cultural-linguistic choice is not mere ornamentation; it functions as a hermeneutical strategy that situates Qur'anic teachings within the lived experiences of his community, demonstrating the relevance of revelation to specific socio-cultural contexts.

Hamka's use of local cultural references extends beyond language to literary analogies that carry moral and ethical weight. For instance, in al-Baqarah [2]: 65, he employs the image of an old monkey, once capable of harvesting coconuts but later reduced to plucking its own hair, to critique stubbornness and moral decline. Similarly, in al-Baqarah [2]: 219, he exposes colonial tactics, such as promoting alcohol and gambling, which undermined the moral and spiritual integrity of Muslim communities. By embedding these critiques within familiar cultural imagery, Hamka connects Qur'anic guidance to both local tradition and broader societal concerns, creating a *tafsir* that functions simultaneously as religious commentary and social critique.

Political reflection is another significant dimension of Hamka's *tafsir*. In his interpretation of al-Baqarah [2]: 251, he invokes a local saying that even a worm resists when trampled, emphasizing that passivity in the face of oppression leads to destruction, whereas resilience ensures survival. This metaphor is informed by his own political experiences, including his exile to Sukabumi in 1941, and illustrates how his commentary bridges ethical principles, spiritual insight, and socio-political awareness. Through such aphoristic strategies, Hamka is able to critique authority indirectly, balancing bold political commentary with cultural acceptability.

When compared with Sayyid Quṭb's *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, Hamka's *tafsir* appears less ideologically confrontational yet remains critically engaged. Unlike Quṭb's revolutionary rhetoric, Hamka's commentary employs vernacular idioms and culturally grounded metaphors to make profound ethical and political observations. This approach underscores the adaptability of Qur'anic exegesis, showing that it can communicate critique and guidance effectively within culturally specific frameworks without compromising theological depth.

Overall, Hamka's interpretation of al-Baqarah exemplifies a sophisticated integration of theology, literature, culture, and politics. By weaving together *pantun*, proverbs, parables, aphorisms, and vernacular expressions, he renders Qur'anic teachings intelligible and meaningful within the cultural and historical realities of Minangkabau society.³¹ His *tafsir* reflects the interplay between divine guidance and human experience, highlighting how local context

³¹ Avif Alfiyah, "Metode Penafsiran Buya Hamka dalam Tafsir Al-Azhar," *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Usbuluddin* 15, no. 1 (2022): 30-52.

can illuminate universal truths without diminishing their significance.

In conclusion, positioning Hamka's *tafsir* within the continuum of both classical Nusantara works and modernist exegesis underscores its distinctive character: a synthesis of vernacular literary culture with universal Qur'anic principles. This makes *Tafsir al-Azhar* a critical reference for comparative exegesis, illustrating how culturally grounded interpretations can enrich the understanding of revelation while addressing the ethical, social, and political concerns of specific communities.

Conclusion

This study found that the literary and cultural dimensions of Minangkabau profoundly influenced the composition of *Tafsir al-Azhar* by Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah. The findings confirm that cultural influences are expressed through both literary elements and broader socio-cultural frameworks, which are intricately woven into the *tafsir*'s structure. The research employed a critical discourse analysis framework to trace specific contexts, including the production and consumption of the text, as well as the socio-cultural factors shaping the discourse. In line with the research questions, the following points were identified.

First, the analysis reveals the foundational role of literary and cultural influences in the creation of *Tafsir al-Azhar*. Literary elements such as *pantun*, proverbs, parables, and aphorisms are systematically employed, while cultural influences are evident in the use of Minangkabau language, reflections on local social practices, and political commentary embedded in the interpretation of Surah al-Baqarah. Together, these aspects illustrate that Hamka's exegetical approach cannot be disentangled from the interplay between literature and culture, demonstrating how local idioms and narrative forms enrich the conveyance of Qur'anic meanings.

Second, the study shows that Hamka's work could not remain unaffected by his Minangkabau heritage. Hamka interpreted the Qur'an with a distinctive linguistic and literary style, embedding his cultural background into the *tafsir*. This produced a unique exegetical voice, positioning *Tafsir al-Azhar* not only as a work of religious scholarship but also as a product of Nusantara intellectual tradition. The strong literary and cultural nuances contribute to its identity as

a Nusantara *tafsir*, underscoring the importance of preserving it as part of the region's intellectual and cultural heritage.

The author emphasizes the need for further exploration of the intersections between culture and language in Qur'anic interpretation. Future research is recommended in the fields of Literature and Culture, Qur'anic Studies and Exegesis, and the History of Islamic Civilization in the Nusantara, in order to expand understanding of how local cultural contexts continue to shape religious scholarship.

Acknowledgments

We sincerely thank Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ahmad Izzan, M.Ag., for his generous support through funding, research opportunities, and access to essential data, as well as his invaluable guidance in *tafsir*, particularly regarding critical discourse theory, conceptual frameworks, and exegetical analysis. We also extend our appreciation to Mohammad Irfan Farraz Haecal, S.Ag., M.Sc., whose expertise on Minangkabau aristocratic traditions, the historical trajectories of the Malay world, and the intellectual networks of sixteenth-century scholars has greatly enriched the cultural and historical depth of this study, ensuring its rigor and contextual grounding.

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