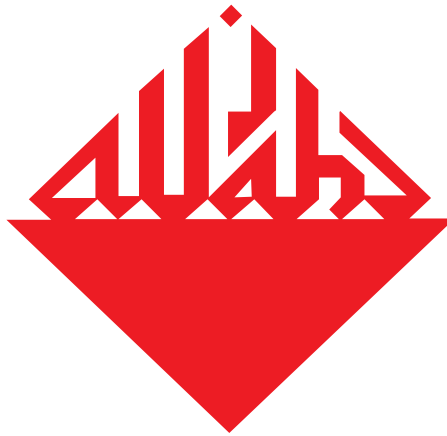


STUDIA ISLAMIKA

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THE ACCULTURATION STRATEGY OF THE TABUT COMMUNITY IN BENGKULU

Nelly Marhayati & Suryanto

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Norbani B. Ismail

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The Qur'anic Exegesis, Reformism, and Women in Twentieth Century Indonesia

Abstract: *The paper examines the process of idea formation and intellectual roots of al-Manār reform in the field of tafsīr and the transmission of its ideas through the tafsīr work of Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, also known as Hamka (d.1981). It argues that Hamka internalized al-Manār reform in his writings, particularly in his seminal exegetical work, Tafsir al-Azhar. This paper studies Hamka's interpretation of the Qur'anic verses and passages related to women, such as: equality in marriage and divorce, gender equality, polygamy, and modesty. Hamka exhibited originality and creativity within a Southeast Asian context in interpreting these verses related to women's issues. His writing also synthesized and manifested the symbiotic links between past exegetical approaches and modern ones. The result was an interpretation of the Quran that speaks to the Southeast Asian indigenous Muslim culture, while being firmly rooted within the Islamic intellectual tradition and modernist reform.*

Keywords: *Tafsīr Al-Azhār, Hamka, Quran and Women in Indonesia, Tafsīr al-manār and Reform in Indonesia.*

Abstrak: Artikel ini membahas proses pembentukan gagasan dan akar-akar intelektual al-Manār yang reformis di bidang tafsir dan transmisi gagasannya melalui karya tafsir karya Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, yang juga dikenal sebagai Hamka (w. 1981). Argumen artikel ini ialah bahwa Hamka menginternalisasi reformasi al-Manār dalam tulisan-tulisannya, terutama dalam karya tafsirnya yang monumental, Tafsir al-Azhar. Tulisan ini mengkaji interpretasi Hamka tentang ayat-ayat Alquran dan ayat-ayat yang berkaitan dengan perempuan, seperti: kesetaraan dalam pernikahan dan perceraian, kesetaraan jender, poligami, dan kesopanan. Hamka telah menunjukkan orisinalitas dan kreativitas di dalam konteks Asia Tenggara dalam menafsirkan ayat-ayat yang berkaitan dengan isu-isu perempuan. Tulisannya juga mensintesis dan memanifestasikan hubungan-hubungan simbiosis antara pendekatan tafsir terdahulu dengan pendekatan yang modern. Hasilnya adalah interpretasi Alquran yang lekat dengan konteks budaya masyarakat Muslim di Asia Tenggara, namun ia juga mengakar dalam tradisi intelektual Islam dan reformasi modernis.

Kata kunci: Tafsīr Al-Azhār, Hamka, Alquran dan Perempuan di Indonesia, Tafsīr al-Manār dan Reformasi in Indonesia.

ملخص: تتناول هذه المقالة عملية تكوين الأفكار والجذور الفكرية لتفسير المنار ذي الطابع الإصلاحية في مجال التفسير ونقل أفكاره من خلال التفسير الذي ألفه الحاج عبد الملك كريم أمر الله، الذي أطلق عليه أيضا اسم حمكا (ت: 1981م). وتستند هذه المقالة إلى قيام حمكا بإدخال القيم الإصلاحية التي يتضمنها تفسير المنار إلى كتاباته وخاصة تفسيره البارز؛ تفسير الأزهر. تدرس هذه المقالة تفسير حمكا للآيات القرآنية والآيات المتعلقة بالمرأة مثل: المساواة في النكاح والطلاق والمساواة في الجندر وتعدد الزوجات والأخلاق. وقد أظهر حمكا الأصالة والابتكار في تفسيره للآيات المتعلقة بقضايا المرأة في سياق جنوب شرق آسيا. كما تجمع المقالة وتظهر العلاقات التعاونية بين مقاربات التفسير القديمة والمقاربات الحديثة. والحصيلة هي تفسير القرآن المتصق بسياق ثقافة المجتمع المسلم في جنوب شرق آسيا، وتفسير متجذر في الوقت نفسه في تقاليد الفكر الإسلامي وإصلاح الحداثي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تفسير الأزهر، حمكا، القرآن والمرأة في إندونيسيا، تفسير المنار، الإصلاح في إندونيسيا.

The early twentieth century's reformist 'ulamā'¹ argued for urgency in societal reforms through a renewal in the understanding of the Quran and Ḥadīth, so that their relevance to new realities could be established (Nafi 2004, 39–50). The notion that Muslims were in deep crises, despite being given the Quran, baffled many intellectuals of the early twentieth century. It is within the discourse and the framework of renewing the understanding of the divine texts that many Quranic exegetical works were written in the twentieth century. The works of Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935), Aḥmad Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī (d.1945) and Sayyid Quṭb (d.1966), to name a few, fit within the renewed approach to exegesis in the twentieth century, despite their inclination to the political persuasions of the modernist ideas. Generally, these works were posited within the multifaceted intellectual, socio-economic, and political crises that confronted Muslim societies at the time. The intellectuals of the time believed that Muslim societies were in an urgent need to revive their relationship with God's words, so that they would become the guidance that illuminates modern life. Muḥammad 'Abduh believed the inability of the Muslims to be fully guided by the Quran was not due to the absence of *tafsīr* works; rather, these works were ineffective in providing direction and remedies for modern problems (Riḍā 1973, 1: 17).

In the Malay-Indonesian world, one of the most influential exegetical works of the twentieth century is that of Hamka, an acronym for Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah (d. 1981). Hamka's *Tafsīr al-Azhar* sought to become a reference for the Malay-speaking non-scholarly class of Muslims whose direct understanding of the Quran was limited due to lack of proficiency in Arabic, the language of the Quran. *Tafsīr al-Azhar* helped its readers to understand the message of the Quran and gave them the opportunity to access the scholarly worlds of the Islamic exegetical tradition and corpus. Hamka's exegesis showcases "creative appropriation of elements from Muslim modernism and elsewhere" and it "has subsequently come to characterize other works of 20th century Indonesian translation and commentary" (Feener 1998, 62). The paper argues that Hamka's exegetical work operated within the broad framework of reformist *tafsīr* of the twentieth century, pioneered by the Egyptian al-Manār school of *tafsīr* that was led by Muḥammad 'Abduh (d.1905) and, later, by his disciple Raṣhīd Riḍā (Johns 2005, 35; Sirry 2014, 16). It further claims that Hamka's *Tafsīr al-Azhar* is a

mediator of al-Manār's school of *tafsīr* to the Malay-Indonesian world, although he rearticulated and appropriated it for the indigenous socio-political contexts of the region – thus displaying a remarkable level of originality. This article studies Hamka's interpretation of the Quranic verses and passages related to gender equality, marriage, divorce, polygamy, and modesty. It further highlights his interpretive approaches, attitude towards the exegetical tradition, and original interpretive turns in his work. Hamka's exegesis on women's issues reveals his embrace of al-Manār school's approach to *tafsīr*, but not without the synthesis that shows his creativity. Hamka's pursuit to intermingle between two broad exegetical methods, for example, *tafsīr* based on tradition and *tafsīr* based on personal reflections, highlighted his ingenuity in extracting and framing an appropriate method. An examination of Hamka's interpretation, particularly on verses related to women, such as gender equality, marriage and divorce, polygamy and modesty, shows that he creatively conjoined the principles of established exegetical authorities and those of the reformist school of *tafsīr*. The present study is not an attempt to feature Hamka's contribution to feminist cause as understood by liberal feminism; rather, it is an exploration of his methods in using both intra-textual and the inter-textual dynamics in interpreting Quranic verses and passages related to women's issues. His engagement with the Sunnah/Hadīth, the opinions of the Companions of the Prophet and their Successors, and the historical contexts of the texts, inform us how his exegesis became an authority that shaped ideas about Muslim women's issues in the Malay world. A survey of his interpretation shows that Hamka, for instance, departed from Muḥammad 'Abduh's modernist understanding of polygamy, which called for a change in rulings such as its abolition if the husband failed to be fair to his co-wives (Riḍā 1973, 4: 293-4). Rather, Hamka read the text with the idea that it required the use of human intellect and creativity in the form of exercising personal *ijtihād*, which is deeply rooted in Islamic jurisprudence, to solve the abuse and misuse of polygamy in Muslim societies.

Reformists' Approach to Quranic Exegesis: Muḥammad 'Abduh's and Rashīd Riḍā's *Tafsīr al-manār*

The twentieth century Egyptian Muslim scholar Muḥammad 'Abduh² and his disciple Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā³ saw that the existing

pre-modern *tafsīr* works, despite their voluminous contributions and multiple orientations, failed to highlight the Quran as a book of guidance (Riḍā 1973, 1: 19). This shortcoming necessitated applying new approaches to both interpreting the Quran and applying its messages. *Tafsīr al-manār* can be seen as ‘Abduh’s and Riḍā’s platform to advocate a new approach to interpreting the Quran within the framework of reformist ideas. This new approach was believed to not only distance itself from the deficiency of previous exegetical works but also one that was deemed competent to showcase the compatibility of the Quran to contemporary realities. Generally, modern *tafsīr* is posited in contradistinction to pre-modern works, although some features between the two do overlap.⁴

‘Abduh’s and Riḍā’s reformist approach to exegesis can be deduced from the introduction of *Tafsīr al-manār*,⁵ in which both alluded to what they saw as prevalent crises with the existing collection of *tafsīr* works. The two reformists found it problematic for an exegesis to liberally, without verification, consult stories of *isrā’īliyyāt*,⁶ some of which are contradictory to logic and established Islamic teachings. Extensive discussion on the scholar’s disagreement on legal verses, and on theological speculations (*al-kalām*) to support exegetes’ political views was undesirable. Some interpreters positioned their works towards understanding actions and behaviors from the spiritual-mystical dimension (*ṣūfī*), while others wrote on the hidden inner-meaning of the Quran (*al-ishārah al-bāṭiniyyah*) (Riḍā 1973, 1: 17-18). According to them, emphasizing one or more of these aspects in an exegesis risks fixating the readers away from the essential messages of the Quran. ‘Abduh and Riḍā viewed the superior approach to interpreting the Quran was to recognize “the Quran as a religion/way of life (*dīn*); it is the guidance from God to humans in which it prescribes how to attain happiness in the world and in the hereafter” (Riḍā 1973, 1: 19). Though knowledge of grammar, rhetoric, philology, style of expression, and the strange words or expressions (*gharā’ib al-Qur’ān*) of the Arabic language is essential to understand the Quran, a preoccupation with them compromises an exegete’s insight and ability to achieve a higher purpose, that is, to understand the message of the Quran (Riḍā 1973, 1: 19). Furthermore, the utmost duty of an exegete is to highlight God’s messages in the Quran to humans because He speaks to all human beings through the Quranic expression “O humankind” (*yā ayyuha al-*

nās). Therefore, comprehending the message of the Quran (with the help of the exegetes) is an indispensable individual duty regardless of one's intellectual capacity (Riḍā 1973, 1: 21).

‘Abduh and Riḍā laid down some fundamental principles of best practice in Quranic interpretation to showcase it as a book of guidance. A strong command of Quranic vocabularies is vital since some words are polysemic, and have changed their meaning over time. The styles of the Quran and its expressions must be studied to understand their intended meaning. An understanding of the human condition, the wrongdoings and mischief of previous people and nations, the righteous life of the Prophet and his Companions, and God's Divine laws that regulate human relationships, are also necessary to reach a better understanding of the Quran. If these multifaceted principles are applied when interpreting the Quran, ‘Abduh and Riḍā contended, an exegete will be able to underscore the Quranic characteristic as ‘guidance and mercy’ (*hudan wa rahmatan*) to humanity. Likewise compromising these principles may hamper Muslims from learning the true teachings of the Quran (Riḍā 1973, 1: 25). Abduh and Riḍā warned that some Muslims misdirected their focus on unestablished debatable issues⁷ that have diverted them from the true guidance of the Quran (Riḍā 1973, 1: 27).

‘Abduh's and Riḍā's vision of reform in Quranic exegesis as echoed in the introduction to *Tafsīr al-manār* reveals a slight departure from centuries-old exegetical traditions. They elucidated what they perceived to be the problem in the existing exegetical tradition, for example, the failure to highlight the Quran as a book of guidance. *Al-Manār* states an ideal method in exegesis is “to explain the meaning of the Quran with other verses, with the traditions of the Prophet and with the opinions of the Companions and the Successors (*al-māthūr*) to the extent of need; also to minimize using previous scholars' opinions (*al-manqūl*) so as to allow exegete's intellectual freedom through independent reasoning (*ijtihād*)” (al-Banna 2003, 136). Perhaps *Tafsīr al-manār* can be seen as an attempt to ‘purify’ the exegesis from the reports of *isrā'īlīyāt*, fabricated Hadith (*hadīth mawḍū'*), innovation in religion (*bid'ah*), speculative theology (*kalām*), and grammatical digressions, with the hope to set an example for later exegesis (al-Rūmi 1981, 143). ‘Abduh's and Riḍā's exegetical work paved a way for many exegetical works in the Muslim world, from Egypt to South Asia and to Southeast Asia.⁸ Those works were inspired, to a larger or a lesser degree, by their reformist approaches to *tafsīr*.

Transfer of Middle Eastern Reformist Ideas to the Malay World

The transnational ideational movement of the Egyptian al-Manār's school of *tafsir* into the Indonesian exegetical work as displayed in *Tafsir al-Azhar* can be seen as a reiteration of intellectual exchange of the past that had been established as early as the late sixteen century between Southeast Asia and the Middle East (Riddell 2001, 192; Roff 2009, 133). Southeast Asian Muslims and pilgrims embarked on long arduous journeys for knowledge acquisition to the cities of Mecca and Medina. The pilgrims did not only visit these two cities for their spiritual duties, but many of them also took the opportunity to socialize with and to learn Islamic traditional knowledge from the scholars of the two cities (Azra 2004, 2–3). The presence of the Southeast Asian intellectual community in cities like Mecca could be seen in Malay printing activities on various disciplines of Islamic tradition that were conducted there (Othman 1998, 147; Shiozaki 2015, 168–70). In the late nineteenth century, many of them would continue their intellectual journey to Cairo, another important city of Islamic tradition, and spend many years of their life there to acquire knowledge about Islam (Feener 2010, 46).

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, there were as many as two hundred 'Jawa' (a term the locals used to refer to the Indonesians/Malaysians) students who studied at Cairo's al-Azhar University, the traditional learning center for Islam established in 970 CE. (Roff 2009, 133) Upon returning home from these cities, scholars, students, merchants, and pilgrims helped disseminate Middle Eastern reformist ideas through books, published articles in journals, lectures at local mosques, and accounts of personal experience. In education, schools that integrated Islamic and secular subjects were established where modern sensibilities and curricula were taught that eventually helped to spread reformist ideas (Riddell 2001, 192; Roff 2009, 133). The Malay intellectuals who were influenced by Egyptian reformist ideas also published their own magazines, albeit short-lived, that became mouthpieces of locally inspired reformist voices. Azra's study shows that Singapore-based *al-Imām*, published briefly between 1906-1908, resonated similar messages to the Egyptian *al-Manār*. The ideational similarities between the two journals were not coincidental. Al-Imam's editors were proponents of reformism; Shaykh Muḥammad Ṭāhir ibn Jalāluddīn, who studied in Cairo, was a close companion

of Rashīd Riḍā (Azra 1999, 82–83). Another intellectual agent of reformism in the Malay world was the West Sumatra-based journal *al-Munīr*, published between 1911 and 1916, which was perceived as a continuity of *al-Imām* after the former ceased to exist. As a reformist voice, it challenged the embedded religio-cultural practices and ideas in society that were deemed unfounded in Islamic traditions, such as: blind imitation (*taqlīd*), unfounded practices (*bid'ah*), and superstitious belief (*khurāfah*) (Azra 1999, 95–96). Despite its short life, *al-Munīr* inspired the publication of other reform-based magazines in the region that helped “the rise of West Sumatra as one of the strongest bastions of Islamic reformism in the whole Malay-Indonesian world” (Azra 1999, 97). Decades after the publication of these magazines, reformist ideas also took shape in the form of exegetical work; it is within these reformist discourses pioneered by ‘Abduh and Riḍā that Hamka placed his own reform ideas in his works, chiefly in *Tafsir al-Azhar*.

Hamka and *Tafsir al-Azhar*

Hamka was born into the lineage of a scholarly religious family in the Minangkabau Highlands of West Sumatra. His father Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah, also known as Hadji Rasul, was an influential religious figure in Indonesia (Hamka 1982a, 93–162, 1982b, 81, Rusydi 1983, 2, 2001, 6; Steenbrink 1994, 127–29; M. Y. Yusuf 1990, 33).

Hamka was educated in various traditionalist and reformist schools in Sumatra and mastered the Arabic language, the classical Islamic tradition, and Indonesian literature (Howell 2010, 1031; Sirry 2014, 16–17). His extensive educational travels to different places in Indonesia and Mecca eventually predisposed him to become a renowned scholar.⁹ He also studied the ideas and literature of prominent scholars of the Middle East (Hadler 1998, 134–35) particularly twentieth century Egyptian writers Muṣṭafā Ṣādiq al-Rāfi‘i (1880-1937), Ḥusayn Haykal (1888-1956), and Ṭāha Ḥusayn (1889-1973).¹⁰ Hamka led an important modernist Muslim organization in Indonesia, *Muhammadiyah*¹¹ (Burhani 2016, 31–47; Fuad 2004, 400–414; Nashir 2015, 31–48; Ridjaluddin 2008, 1–37). He also reformulated the current practices of *sufism*, an influential social-moral embedded in society that fits within the contemporary Southeast Asian context (Aljunied 2016b, 75–81). Hamka was a prolific writer and penned for several local newspapers and magazines such as *Pelita Andalas*, *Kemauan Zaman*, and *Panji Masyarakat* (Hamka 2002, iv; Rusydi

1983, 2, 2001, 6).¹² Later in life, he was appointed to lead *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (Council of Indonesian Muslim Scholars) that helped promote Muslim unity in Indonesia. Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar* was originally a series of morning lectures at al-Azhar Mosque in Jakarta (H. H. S. Salim 2012, 86).¹³ The title of his exegetical work. *Tafsir al-Azhar* was written and compiled during his two years of imprisonment (D. P. Salim 2015, 39).¹⁴ His seminal exegesis shows how he perceived the role of the Quran in guiding modern Muslim affairs in the diverse societies of Southeast Asia. He felt obliged to write the exegesis since it was part of his communal moral-religious duty (*farḍ kifāyah*). His *tafsir* aimed to explain the meaning of the Quran to Malay-speaking readers whose direct access to the Quran and to Quranic commentaries was limited due to a lack of mastery of the Arabic language. It also aimed to provide intellectual and moral support for activists who preached Islam (*da'wah*) to critically-minded Muslims who now valued and demanded knowledge that was based on facts and evidence (Hamka 1984d, 1: 4).

Hamka employed the same principles that previous exegetes employed in their works: Arabic and its styles, grammar and philology, occasions of revelations (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), the abrogating and the abrogated (*al-nāsikh wa al-mansūkh*), the ḥadīth and reports related to the interpreted passages, and principles of Islamic jurisprudence in deducing the ruling of particular verse. He opined that these principles are necessary, otherwise exegesis would be a discipline without rules, although unlike his medieval predecessors, he employed them sparingly (Hamka 1984d, 1: 3). Hamka deemed the role of the Prophet's *sunnah* (his sayings, deeds and approvals) as indispensable in deducing the ruling from the Quran, without which an exegete may risk unsound judgment (Hamka 1984d, 1: 25-26)¹⁵

Hamka was very restrained, much like 'Abduh and Riḍā, in employing *isrā'iliyāt* in exegesis. He believed that the *isrā'iliyāt*¹⁶ reports, which are extra-scriptural supplements to the Quran, are an impediment that prevent Muslims from uncovering the truth and the guidance of the Quran. In this, he echoed 'Abduh and Riḍā on *isrā'iliyāt* (Hamka 1984d, 1: 32-34). Hamka was also very cautious in accepting a report, and thought that contemporary *tafsir* should be free from prevalent centuries-old unverifiable reports that do not correspond with the spirit of the Quran and logical reasoning (*akal*). He was aware that this stance towards unproven reports might not be popular as he might be accused

by his detractors of deviating from the path of the *People of Tradition and the Consensus (Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama'á)* (Hamka 1984d, 1: 29).

Hamka valued the role of independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) in knowledge construction as demonstrated by the Companions and prominent scholars like that of al-Zamakhshārī (1070-1143) and al-Ghazālī (1058-1111). Based on their stance, Hamka concluded that employing *ijtihad* is crucial in understanding the implicit texts, which requires perceptions of time and spatial contexts. Likewise, the method of relying solely on *sunnah/hadith* in exegesis may not be possible due to the limited number and narrowed scope of the reports. Nevertheless in interpreting legal verses, one must also heed the importance of the established reports (*riwāyāt*) from the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, the opinions of the Companions and their Successors, and of previous scholars. However, on matters related to the natural world and humans' worldly affairs (including modern sensibilities), an interpreter must use *ijtihad*, real-life experience and meticulous research to ensure his exegesis is grounded in the 'Light' (*Nūr*) of Islam. In essence, interpreting the Quran in contemporary times requires exercising one's *ijtihad*, a mastery of Arabic linguistics and local and vernacular language, conformity with the teachings of the Prophet, and avoiding politicizing one's legal school of thought (*madhhab*). Hamka concluded that Islam permits independent reasoning for those who are equipped with the necessary knowledge (*bagi yang ahli*); the use of *ijtihad* becomes even more acute because Muslims do not have a central authority that dictates and enforces uniformity in opinions (Hamka 1984d, 1: 37-39; 4: 214).

Hamka admired 'Abduh's and Raṣḥīd Riḍā's exegetical work and that *Tafsīr al-Azhar* was written within the reform framework of *Tafsīr al-manār* (Hamka 1984d, 1: 41-42).¹⁷ He contended that despite the socio-economic and political changes that took place in the Muslim world since *Tafsīr al-manār* was first written, its modern approaches to *tafsīr* remained relevant and necessary to the Malay-speaking world (Hamka 1984d, 1: 40-41). In contrast to 'Abduh and Riḍā, who perceived that prior extant *tafsīr* works somewhat failed to illuminate the guidance of the Quran to their readers, Hamka thought those exegeses made immense contribution to the corpus of Islamic tradition in their own way. Notwithstanding, just like 'Abduh and Rida, Hamka affirmed that *isrā'īlyāt* reports and lengthy discussions on legal rulings

are an unnecessary impediment to uncovering the truth of the Quran. Hamka's discussions on legal issues highlighted the message of the Quran, and facilitated the contemplation of the readers about Quranic messages (Hamka 1984d, 1: 40-41). Hamka was conscientious to negotiate the intricate relationship between the past exegetical legacy and the present; he employed crucial yet relevant approaches and methods of exegesis that suited the modern time while consciously attributing the past its due respect. This symbiotic approach to the interpretation of the Quran is the strength of *Tafsir al-Azhar*. As Milhan Yusuf concluded, Hamka "...proposed a new method of interpreting the Quran that was compatible with the modern era" (M. Yusuf 2005, 48).¹⁸

Hamka's Interpretation on Verses Related to Women Issues

The early twentieth century debate on women's rights and empowerment among Muslims in Southeast Asia was informed by and framed within the debates that took place in the West. The Western-dominated dialectic shaped the Muslim discourse on women's issues, which revolved around reacting and responding to Western-dominated discussions: that is, either resisting the perceived Western cultural hegemony, or calling for judicious collaboration and adoption of Western ideas into Muslim contexts (Ahmed 1992, 236). The Muslims felt that the essence of the argument prescribed by the Western discourse was that empowering women's condition in the Muslim world would require freeing them from the shackles of religio-cultural restrictions.

In early twentieth century Indonesia, women gained a greater awareness of their gender-based rights and needs in marriage, law, and policy, through education. They believed in the need to formally organize to gain recognition from the establishment, demand to be part of national policies, and to advocate for gender-specific concerns (Jayawardena 1994, 149-50). The female contingents of two major Islamic social movements in Indonesia – *Nahdlatul Ulama* and *Muhammadiyah* – also encouraged women-focused activism. Nevertheless the voice that called for a greater role for women in public spaces was not monolithic; rather there was resistance towards welcoming "women's leadership in many areas of public life." (Aljunied 2016a, 179). Hamka's interpretation of women-related issues was informed and framed by this historical discourse on women issues; at times he contested the existing practices

that might be seen as chauvinistic, other times he provided a fresh alternative to them, all within the principles of Islam and his reform ideas. Hamka's interpretation of these issues became a means for him to challenge existing assumptions and practices relating to women, and to construct a modern Muslim identity, particularly for women in the Malay-speaking world. Therefore Hamka used the exegesis to provide an idea of a modern Muslim identity that operates within modern sensibilities, as guided by the spirit of the Quran.

Gender Equality

Hamka thought that gender equality should not be an issue among Indonesian Muslims since Islam has guaranteed women equal rights (Hamka 1984d, 1: 537, n.d., 169).¹⁹ He argued that the Quran talks about gender equality within the context of the sameness of human creation (Quran, 4:1), in which it binds humanity regardless of skin color, races or tradition. The verse demands God-consciousness from both men and women, and reminds them that they are created from one single entity. The verse points to a moral-spiritual basis for equality that men and women deserve before God on the basis of the origin of their creation from one entity (Hamka 1984b, 2). Hamka departed from the path that many classical exegesis embarked on when he interpreted '*wa khalaqa minhā zawjahā*' as "a mate was created out of the living entity", an interpretation based on its evident meaning (Hamka 1984d, 4: 217). Unlike Hamka, some prominent classical exegetes interpreted the passage beyond its axiomatic meaning and concluded that the mate who was created from the single person/entity (Ādam) was Ḥawā (Al-Tabari 2001, 6: 339). Hamka's position to strictly hold to the evident meaning of the entity rather than of a person (Ādam) would still showcase common shared brotherhood among humans. His position that humans are created out of an entity rather than a male person supports a case for gender equality that concurs with 'Abduh's reading on the matter. In essence, 'Abduh concluded Ādam was not explicitly mentioned in the verse "*laysa al-murād bi al-naḥs al-wāḥid Ādam bi al-naḥs wa lā bi al-zāhir*" (Riḍā 1973, 4: 323).

Hamka disagreed with the classical commentators such as leading Companion Ibn 'Abbās²⁰ and the tenth century Baghdadi historian/exegete Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī who interpreted '*wa khalaqa minhā zawjahā*' (created from it its mate) that God created Ḥawā from Ādam's left rib

(Hamka 1984d, 4: 217). Hamka took the initiative to decipher the verse based on its evident meaning; the verse does not mention explicitly that the entity is Ādam, or that Ḥawā created from his left rib. Hamka diverged from some classical interpretations by saying that Ḥawā was not created from Ādam's rib; he argued that the creation of woman from the rib as mentioned in the *ḥadīth* is a metaphor, and should not be read literally (Hamka 1984d, 1:174-175).²¹ Furthermore, Hamka believed that the narrations that consider that Ḥawā was created out of Ādam's rib as *isrā'īliyyāt*²² sources, and as a reformist he avoided applying them altogether (Hamka 1984d, 1:177). Perhaps Hamka was aware about the misuse of the *ḥadīth* about the creation of Ādam and Ḥawā by some ill-intended men in Muslim cultures to perpetuate the subjugation of women. He advised his readers that the *ḥadīth* reminds the Muslim man to be gentle and respectful to his wife as his partner in this world. Being respectful to her, making her an equal partner in life, and giving her the high position that she deserves at home and in society are the means to achieve gender equality (Hamka 1984a, 1: 178). Hamka's notion on gender equality is hardly unheard of considering his work is largely drawn from sources like *al-Manār*, which also discussed women-related issues (Bauer 2015, 228). Decades later, modernists such as Fazlur Rahman argued that men and women deserve absolute equality in piety and virtue and "those sayings attributed to the Prophet that speak of women's inferiority and require them to obey and worship their husbands ... are clearly departed from the teachings of the Quran" (Mir-Hosseini 2013, 22). Contemporary North American feminist scholars like Amina Wadud (1992, 19) and Azizah al-Hibri (2015, 133) argue that naming the single entity as Ādam, and that Ḥawā was created from his left rib, signifies her secondary status as a person, which perpetuates gender inequality.²³ Hamka's contribution to gender equality should not necessarily be judged from the Western liberal perspective because he does not reference it. His arguments are largely derived from Islamic sources, thus reinforcing his aim of informing readers about the malleability of the Islamic intellectual tradition. As Bauer shows, the scholars deduce conclusions based on tradition to carry out reform that allows elasticity in textual readings, and not necessarily to eternalize patriarchy (Bauer 2015, 230).

In demonstrating gender equality in Islam, Hamka employed multilayered inter-textual and intra-textual sources. He used Quranic

references to a few righteous women such as the mothers of Mūsā and ʿĪsā, whose faith and actions were exemplary (Hamka 1984b, 3–4). He cited Quranic verses (Quran, 9:71-72) to prove spiritual-moral and faith equality could be established through communal or individual religious responsibilities, such as commanding good and forbidding evil, performing prayers, or paying *zakāh*. Similarly he used the story of the Prophet's wife Khadijah, who tirelessly supported his prophetic missions through her assurance when he was in doubt after receiving the first revelation. As Hamka remarked:

Equality implied here is not necessarily having the opportunity to do the same kind of act; rather, it is an equal opportunity to share the reward for supporting a good cause. Therefore, both man and woman must cooperate to help each other in promoting justice and good cause (Hamka 1984b, 8, 1984d, 4: 47).

Equality in Marriage and Divorce

Hamka used the verse (Quran, 4:34) to argue that it is hard to actualize the notion of absolute gender equality in marriage because man is physically and intellectually more predisposed to lead. Woman's physical and emotional needs necessitate man's leadership in protecting her welfare and granting her due maintenance. Hamka rendered *qiwāmah* in the verse as leadership²⁴ of man over woman. It also includes moral guidance, protection against threats, providing education, and fulfilling her emotional and material needs. *Qiwāmah* denotes a wide range of meaning to a marital relationship "from the most hierarchical and patriarchal to the most co-operative and democratic" (al-Hibri 2015, 157). Its complexity is often closely intertwined with another term in the verse, '*faddala*', which means favoring one over the other. The misconception arises when man is understood as a preferred gender because he is favored by God over woman as concluded by al-Ṭabārī and others (Mubarak 2004, 268–72). ʿAbduh viewed that man's leadership is tied to his knowledge and skills, as well as monetary and physical strength in managing and maintaining marital life (Bauer 2015, 229). A similar reading is echoed in feminist interpretations that emphasize cognitive and financial competence as necessary attributes in acquiring a leadership role (al-Hibri 2015, 161). Fazlur Rahman affirmed that *qiwāmah* then is not an inherent quality (Mir-Hosseini 2013, 23), but a responsibility that is tied with man's ability to provide security

and maintenance, thus denouncing inherent inequality between the genders. To Hamka, the leadership that man assumes in marriage is far from having the power to subjugate her; rather, it is a responsibility to protect her well-being (Hamka 1984b, 72, 1984d, 5: 46). The financial obligation of dowry (*mahr*) that is incumbent on a man upon entering marriage contains an unwritten rule (*undang-undang tidak tertulis*) that authorizes his leadership (due to his maintenance and protection over her) and her consequential consent to his authority (Hamka 1984b, 14, 1984d, 4: 47). He framed man's leadership in marriage and woman's obedience as reciprocal. She is expected to recompense his protection with her obedience. Women's submission to man's leadership and its rewards are equivalent to performing *jihad* (struggle/fighting in the way of God) as a report from the Prophet indicated.²⁵ Here Hamka used both textual and emotional appeals to make his point. He warned about the potential manipulation of the leadership authority by the husband that could cause hardship on the wife. Therefore he reminded men to be fair and just in dealing with their wives, as the best Muslim is the one who treats his wife justly. He also pointed to a cultural reference: "the Indonesian culture respects women and regards them as equal partners to men, none is better than the other" (Hamka 1984d, 1: 537, n.d., 169). Hamka was well aware of disparity between the ideals of Islam and the reality of the matter. Therefore, he reprimanded his readers that in a situation where women's rights were not fully surrendered to them, it was always due to men's patriarchal control over women (Hamka 1984d, 2: 210).

Hamka was aware of the reality of the institution of marriage in his society and questioned men who abused their leadership authority. He acknowledged that the practices of pre-Islamic culture (*jāhiliyyah*) were still practiced by a small minority where women were treated like their husbands' property, and were psychologically abused in ways that prevented them from defending their rights (Hamka 1984d, 4: 300-301). In his pursuit to end this discrimination, he guided his male readers to follow examples from the Prophet's life in treating his co-wives with kindness, being sensitive to their feelings, and granting them freedom of movement (Hamka 1984d, 4: 302). Hamka also reassured that "[a woman] should not be scared of being kind towards her husband since any good deed she does for him is compensated (in the hereafter) by God. Furthermore Islam does not demand her to blindly

obey her husband” (Hamka 1984b, 21). Here Hamka mitigated her fear of being used by her husband through moral/spiritual encouragement that if humans fail to reward one another, God is always the biggest Compensator.

In verse (Quran, 4: 34) Hamka explained marital discord (*nushūz*)²⁶ as a “woman’s acts of rebellion towards her husband”.²⁷ According to him, ‘*daraba*’ (beating) in the verse is a polysemic term that led both classical and modern scholars to prescribe various meanings to it: some viewed ‘beating’ as a symbolic punishment; others opined beating should be executed with something light that does not cause physical injury such as with a toothbrush, or handkerchief; yet others viewed it as just a Quranic permissibility and not an injunction – thus, it should be avoided altogether (Brown, 2014:268-280). Muslims scholars used extra-textual sources of Prophetic narrations to explain the verse that seemingly sanctions violence against women during marital discord. Through various reports, the Prophet was described as ‘ethically resistant’ towards physical disciplining during the conflict (Chaudhry 2011, 435). In the light of human rights discourse, contemporary scholars however delineate *daraba* as an act that signifies something other than physical striking. *Daraba* then is interpreted as “to depart”, “to prevent from danger”, “to set an example”, or “to create an effect upon” her by applying conflict settlement: advice and then sexual avoidance (Mubarak 2004, 282–85). Hamka demanded his readers to rehearse their moral/ethical consciousness in deducing this verse. He emphasized that the Quran does not command men to beat their wives; rather, they must read this verse with the practical examples shown by the Prophet who dealt with his wives with respect and dignity (Asad 2003, 167; Hamka 1984d, 5: 49-51). Furthermore, the Prophet disliked beating women in any situation, and after the revelation of (Quran 4:34) he submitted to the Divine Will and is reported to have said: “I wanted one thing, but God has willed another and what God has willed must be the best” (Brown 2014, 275; Chaudhry 2011, 416–39).²⁸ The Prophet’s dislike of wife beating is reported on many occasions such as: “Could any of you beat his wife as he would beat a slave, and then lie with her in the evening?” (Al-Bukhāri 1999, 132; Ibn Mājah 1999, 2995). Hamka acknowledged that some husbands emotionally and physically abused their wives based on their literal (mis)reading of the verse. He contended that Muslims must read

the verse in light of the practices of the Prophet who abhorred any kind of physical exertion and punishment against his wives.²⁹ Hamka reminded his readers about indigenous social behavioral expectations by invoking a cultural reference in which a person who resorts to beating is considered uncouth (*kasar budi*) (Hamka 1984b, 78–79, 1984d, 5: 50–53) – an expression that has a strong connotation in Malay/Indonesian language. Furthermore, men are accountable for their behavior and any cruelty committed against the wife in the name of a man's leadership authority will be punished by God.³⁰

Hamka highlighted Quranic justice in protecting women's rights during divorce (Quran, 4:35) through the prescription of arbitrators who negotiate and decide the best option for a disputing couple (Hamka 1984b, 95). However, Hamka felt the need to correct some misconception in society that stigmatizes and blames women during divorce, which causes emotional-psychological suffering to them. He argued that in annulling matrimonial relations, women should not be in disadvantaged position. A man may divorce his wife through *ṭalāq* (divorce) annulment but a woman may also divorce her husband through *khul'* (dissolution of marriage) and agreed compensation regardless of the man's wishes. It was recorded that the Prophet separated a couple through *khul'* after the wife complained about her abusive husband (Hamka 1984b, 96). In Quran (2:228) the woman's right to be treated kindly during the course of divorce is guaranteed, and in return her duty towards him is that during *'iddah* (a mandatory three-month waiting period) she must not conceal the rightful fatherhood of what God has created in her womb. Equally, during this waiting period she deserves the rights to maintenance which Hamka opined must be culturally and contextually interpreted, just like *al-Manār* recommended (Riḍā 1973, 2: 377). The maintenance can be liberally interpreted from clothing to opportunity in education and career training. Hamka reminded his readers that God is displeased with a man who exercises his rights but denies his wife's right to maintenance during the divorce (Hamka 1984d, 2: 211). The verse shows that there is a correlation between kindness towards women during *'iddah*, and God-fearing (*taqwá*) and faith (*īmān*). He added that God-fearing is attainable not only through devotional acts of worship such as praying, but also through human ethical/moral interactions such as one's treatment of his wife. In fact, moral conscientiousness is hard to attain when a man (husband) is

disrespectful towards his wife, and his failure to understand Quranic injunctions on marital matters may lead him to oppress her (Hamka 1984d, 2: 219). Hamka recognized that a few jurists in Islamic history who have refused to grant women's rights to/in divorce have indeed gone against the higher objective of the Quran and *Sunnah* in divorce, for example, in regards to the protection rights of both parties (Hamka 1984d, 2: 219-222). He showed his readers that when reading the Quran one must also read it beyond the evident meaning of the verse, and regard must be had to the examples from the life of the Prophet and one's own moral/ethical judgement in marital relations.

Polygamy and Justice

Hamka's interpretation of polygamy reflected the challenges and suffering faced by families due to abuses that were committed, mostly if not exclusively, by husbands (Hamka 1984d, 4: 238). Hamka argued in favor of the Quranic permission to fair polygamy as a means to protect the welfare of orphans and their property. He read Quran (4:3) that marrying up to four wives with the condition of being fair among them is an alternative to exploitation of an orphan's property. Contextually, the verse was revealed to correct peoples' ill-intention to marry a female orphan to exploit her property. Hamka reminded his readers that one may avoid exploiting an orphan's property by not marrying one, yet one may still be susceptible to risk of mistreating co-wives in polygamous marriage (Hamka 1984d, 4: 227-228). He warned that some Muslim men misuse the ruling on the permissibility of polygamy to serve their self-interest; many of them claim that they 'follow the *sunnah*' by practicing polygamy yet they fail to emulate the Prophet's *sunnah* in treating his co-wives fairly (Hamka 2003, 85). The verse (Quran, 4: 129) affirms that being just (*'adl*) among co-wives is very hard to accomplish, especially on matters of love and affection. Material aspects of polygamy such as the equal distribution of wealth, shelter, and time among co-wives might be reasonably arranged, but the husband's emotional preference between them is hard to avoid. Hamka supported this interpretation with a report in which the Prophet, who always treated his co-wives justly, was described to have prayed to God's mercy and forgiveness in matters he was not in control of (love and affection).³¹ To Hamka, it is logical for an ordinary Muslim, whose moral consciousness might not reach the level of the Prophet's, to think

being unbiased among the co-wives is a challenging task. He added that, for generations, polygamous marriage was widely practiced in the matrilineal culture of West Sumatra's Minangkabau (Hadler 1998, 126; Hamka 1984a, 36).³² One of the contributing factors attributed to its continuous practice was the perceived prestige and honor endowed to a family whose daughter married a religious scholar (even if it is a polygamous one), a practice that was well known throughout Islamic history (Berkey 1992, 4). While generally in Islamic tradition the spiritual and material upbringing of children is shouldered by fathers, in Minangkabau culture those responsibilities were assumed by the maternal uncle. It is within this matrilineal culture that a husband felt a reduced parental and spousal responsibility. Therefore, polygamy was not perceived to be an additional duty. This 'adat-based' polygamy has caused breakdown to the family institution, and children were brought up without seeing much of the father. Since polygamy was made easy, a wife was conveniently divorced by the husband so he could marry another wife (Hamka 1984a, 24–25). Hamka noted fathers now became more involved in raising their children, thus having more children through polygamy was not appealing (Hadler 1998, 126; Hamka 1984d, 4: 238-239). He concluded that polygamy requires a man's wise moral-ethical judgement; a person who appreciates peace and tranquility in life definitely prefers monogamous marriage (Hamka 1984c, 2: 125, 1984d, 4: 230).

Hamka deviated from 'Abduh's stance, who called for the restriction and in some cases, prohibition, of polygamy.³³ Hamka's opinion, however, remains within the interpretive tradition that affirms the Quranic permissibility of polygamy. He constructed the meaning of the texts and creatively sought for the solutions that fit within the Islamic tradition and his indigenous cultural context, particularly ones that alleviate the sufferings of women, children, and the family due to the misuse of polygamy.

Modesty and Clothing

Muslim men and women were curious about how best to behave and interact between genders, particularly in public spaces based on the Quranic framework. Hamka expounded that the basis for human interaction is the duty to command good deeds and forbid evil (Quran, 9:71), which is actualized through social and ethical-moral dealings. In

verse (Quran, 24:30) men are reminded about lowering their gaze and women are cautioned about the same moral duty in the following verse. Both verses articulate rules for guarding one's modesty, for example lowering the gaze, and for a woman to hide her ornaments except what is apparent, and to draw the veil over her bosom. The verse (Quran, 24: 31) commands believers to advise their wives on modesty, and it ends with a reminder that God's bliss can only be attained through their honest submission to God. Hamka understood clothing to be related to modesty, but that it also is a form of cultural expression. He said that the Quran is not a fashion book that details clothing styles – it only provides general guidelines that are open for adaptation by any indigenous culture. Muslim women are free to exercise preference in clothing that suits their cultures and individual aesthetic styles as long as it remains within the principles of the Quran and Sunnah. Hamka based this argument on a report in which the Prophet described to Asmā' that a woman in puberty must cover her entire body except her hands and face (Al-Sijistānī 1999, 1522). He argued that human apparel has always been inspired by the local indigenous culture; the *niqāb*, a veil that covers the head and the face, except the eyes, that is usually worn with a loose black over-garment ('*abāya*) by Saudi women may not necessarily be the only modest clothing, and it may not be desired by women from other cultures and locales. Hamka argued that Islam's definition of modest clothing is very accommodating and less rigid compared to national-cultural perspective. A woman remains a Muslim regardless of what cultural dress she wears, but a national-cultural strict interpretation of clothing views absence of national clothing as a sign of eroded national-cultural identity. Hamka's opinion on this issue reflected the decades-long debate between nationalists and Islamists, and the struggle to shape their influence over Muslim identity in Indonesia (Elson 2010, 329–32). He reiterated that the form of clothing is not important as Islam emphasizes the essence of the clothing, that is, to cover the '*awrah*' (intimate parts of body to be concealed) as means to achieve modesty. In fact, Indonesian women have long embraced a diverse range of modest clothing; some have adopted Western dress while some others covered their whole bodies except their eyes, others wore long dress (*jalabiyah*), and some combined national and foreign styles (Hamka 1984c, 65–67, 1984d, 18: 184-185; Lukman 2014, 50; Sunesti 2014, 40–42). Furthermore, one's decency, the highest

objective of clothing, is fundamentally connected to one's conscious submission to God's will, thus the form of clothing is only a peripheral end (Hamka 1984c, 65–67, 1984d, 22: 97-98). Hamka's seemingly flexible attitude towards the idea of modesty concurs with the debates among Indonesian modernists who viewed adopting Western clothing by Muslims to be permissible (Noer 1963, 152). Hamka's viewpoint on modest clothing also exposed the century-long dress policy imposed by the Dutch colonial administration on the Indonesian population, which categorized and prescribed clothing on the basis of ethnic groups.³⁴

Conclusion

Hamka's interpretation of passages related to women's issues reveals the flexibility of the reformist approach in *tafsīr* that was innovated by 'Abduh and Riḍā via *Tafsīr al-manār*, and its influence over Indonesian *tafsīr*. Hamka's interpretation reveals his considerable adherence to centuries of established interpretive tradition. Yet, Hamka exercised caution and creativity, and employed reports (*riwāyāt*) from the Prophet, his Companions and Successors, that he deemed reliable; he strictly adhered to this principle to avoid inventing practices (*bid'ah*), especially on matters related to legal rulings and belief (Hamka 1984d, 1: 34). Milhan Yusuf contented that Hamka made use of two broad main principles when interpreting legal verses: *tafsīr bi al-māthūr* and *tafsīr bi al-ra'y* (M. Yusuf 2005, 41).³⁵ However on matters other than legal rulings and belief, Hamka did not completely count on the *riwāyāt* as he exercised his own opinion (*ijtihād*) to come to conclusions that fit within the Islamic framework, as well as his reformist ideas. It is evident that Hamka believed in the irreplaceable function of the Islamic intellectual tradition in *tafsīr*, yet he also made use of his knowledge about the indigenous socio-cultural politics of his milieu that allowed his *tafsīr* to speak to the heart of the Malay-speaking Southeast Asian Muslims. Adherence to the Islamic tradition and getting inspiration from it is not unique to reformists like Hamka; many reformists of his time were known to be informed by the previous classical scholars such as the fourteenth century Damascene scholars Ibn Taymiyya and his disciple Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawzīyah (Noer 1963, 491).

Hamka's appreciation of past Islamic intellectual legacies and his admiration of the reformist approach to *tafsīr* help us to understand his contribution in preserving the continuity of the two valuable Muslim

heritages that resonated in his work *Tafsir al-Azhar*. To him, a modern *tafsir* still has the duty to adhere to the legacy of the *tafsir* corpus, which helps any exegete to claim intellectual authority in the discipline. Furthermore, as Walid Saleh argues (Saleh 2010, 18), exegetical works of any period always show a reasonable link and continuity with the past corpus through what he termed as ‘genealogical literature’, in which the exegetical authorities in *tafsir* are continuously consulted, quoted or scrapped by subsequent exegetes. To assert legitimacy and authority of their works, the exegetes of any period would have to cite the work of the authorities belonging to the exegetical corpus, regardless of their ranking. In addition, the adoption and application of the past Islamic corpus into a modern intellectual work and context defy the idea that tradition is the opposite of modernity. In fact, tradition is a dynamic establishment that can be described as “ensembles of practices and arguments that secure the social bond and provide cohesiveness to human communities at [a] varying scale” (Salvatore 2009, 5). Talal Asad’s “discursive tradition” shows the malleability and accommodating nature of Muslim traditions that negotiate the past or present context; this highlights its utilitarian nature, which is befitting to Muslim societies, and its ability to extend beyond space, time, and circumstances (Anjum 2007, 656–72; Asad 2009, 1–30).

Hamka’s *tafsir* on verses and passages related to women’s issues reveals that perhaps it is fit to consider him as a voice that championed women’s rights in Southeast Asia. Far from using the language of Western feminism, Hamka not only constructed a Southeast Asian Muslim female identity that is deeply rooted in the Islamic tradition framework, but one that also recognizes indigenous moral-cultural norms/*adat* (Aljunied 2016a, 178). He did not call for women to lead the prayers in mixed congregation; he thought men are always the leaders (*qawwām*) in marriage because of their biological and emotional compositions. However, Hamka did not use his exegeses to promote and justify men’s patriarchal control over women; he strongly reminded his readers that both Islam and Southeast Asian indigenous *adat* grant respect, freedom, and equality to women. With the long history that accompanied women’s empowerment, it is not unusual to make the case for gender equality and freedom based on Islamic ideals and indigenous culture as the springboard for greater equality and freedom to women in Southeast Asia. Anthony Reid points at the unique pattern

of gender relations among Southeast Asian women across traditions and cultures through their autonomy and economic contributions (Reid 1988, 629–30). Southeast Asian Muslim women were believed to have greater opportunities and freedom than women elsewhere in Asia or the Muslim world (Van Doorn-Harder 2006, 38–39). During early colonialism, these women exhibited varying degrees of freedom and power in marriage and divorce, trading, combat resistance, state diplomacy, and ruling. In the early twentieth century, signs of greater freedom and empowerment were visible; discussions about Indonesia's future included the issue of freedom to socialize between genders “while honoring the limits of such socialization” (Van Doorn-Harder 2006, 32). In addition, moderate Islam was understood to allow women to play important public roles (Blackburn 2008, 85). As Van Doorn-Harder argued, “[t]his attitude is unique to Indonesia; in most Islamic countries, especially those in the Middle East, Islamic resurgence often means reducing women's roles to the domestic sphere” (Van Doorn-Harder 2006, 30). Likewise, Muhammadiyah's female wing Aisyiyah aspired for Muslim women to “become independent, economically and in making decisions.” (Van Doorn-Harder 2006, 35). Even if Javanese culture did consider women to be inferior, weak and submissive, and impose “serving in the back” (*konco wingking*), these expectations were believed to be derived from the pre-Islamic Hindu codes of ethics and morals, which were meant to be practiced within the Javanese royal courts (Van Doorn-Harder 2006, 34–35), and therefore may not depict the realities for all women. With an established history that demonstrated a respectful view of women, it is not surprising to see that Hamka never faulted women for their problems; he made a balancing call that emphasized the mutual responsibility of both genders in creating happiness and tranquility in marital relations. He challenged the ‘adat-based’ polygamy practice that men misused to violate women rights, and caused them emotional and psychological suffering. Hamka believed in the complementary roles that both genders play in creating civil society in Southeast Asia — neither gender can live prosperously without the other. As a reformist, Hamka used his *tafsir* not only to expound God's words, but also as a medium to construct an idea of a modern Muslim women identity. It can be seen as a way to create awareness of women's plight and suffering, and inform Muslim how to be active members of a civil democratic society in Southeast Asia.

Hamka's respect of women's abilities and contributions to a country's progress resonates in his words: "*wanita itu adalah tiang agama, kalau wanita itu baik, baiklah Negara, dan kalau mereka bobrok, bobrok pulalah Negara. Mereka adalah tiang, dan biasanya tiang rumah tidaklah begitu kelihatan. Tetapi kalau rumah sudah condong periksalah tiangnya. Tandanya tianglah yang lapuk*" (Hamka 1984b, 15).³⁶

Endnotes

1. What I mean by reformist *'ulamā'* were the scholars who believed that the contemporary Muslims had failed to understand and utilize the fundamental texts of Islam in ways that helped them to be guided by Divine authority in the modern age. The reformist *'ulamā'* advocated the re-reading of the texts in the light of modern living through the exercise of *ijtihād*. They warned against blind imitation (*taqlīd*) of the previous scholars' opinions that were believed to be inhibitive to modern progress and development.
2. Egyptian Muḥammad 'Abduh (1849-1905) was considered 'an architect of Islamic modernism'. He was known for his stance against the *taqlīd* and the call to return to Islamic authenticity. He studied philosophy, jurisprudence, exegesis, and theology at al-Azhar University and was significantly influenced by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī's (1838-1897) modernist ideas. Together they published a journal '*al-'Urwat al-wuthqā'* (Firm Handhold) to spread the ideas of reformism, and resistance against Western imperialism in the Muslim world. Among his most well-known work was '*Risālat al-tawhīd*' (Treatise on Oneness of God) (Cragg, 1995, 1:11; "Muḥammad 'Abduh", 1987, 2:1661. For further reading on his reform ideas and his departure from the al-Azharis religious authority see Haj (2009, 71) and Sedgwick (2010, 102–24).
3. Egyptian/Lebanese Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā was a very important figure in relation to 'Abduh's works and ideas. He wrote 'Abduh's biography, interpreted his ideas and publicized them through the periodical he founded – *al-Manār*. In *al-Manār* magazine, Riḍā's major goals were to promote socio-economic and political reforms; the idea that Islam is relevant to the modern life and sciences; and to educate the Muslims as much as possible to purify Islamic practices from superstitions. He compiled the lectures on the Quran by 'Abduh which were delivered at al-Azhar University, and later published them under the name *Tafsīr al-manār* with 'Abduh's endorsement. He continued publishing 'Abduh's lectures and ideas even after the latter's death by using his own words, but explicitly differentiated between the two (Adams 1993, 177–204; Riḍā 1987, 2: 1660; Shahin 1993, 1–13). Nevertheless Sirry argues that Riḍā should be considered as the sole author of *al-Manār* and he incorporated 'Abduh's lectures to the tafsīr hoping to give more substance to the work (Sirry 2014, 15).
4. Tafsīr started as early as the revelation itself; the prominent Companion Ibn 'Abbas's work was believed to be among the earliest. Up until the eighteenth century, the works of tafsīr may be generally characterized as works that are "Prophetic in origin". As proposed by Ibn Taymiyah in his work *Muqaddimah fī uṣūl al-tafsīr*, tafsīr works may consult Quranic and *Ḥadīth* texts; reports from the Prophet and the opinions of the early generations of Muslims (*salaf*), such as the Companions and Successors. The subscription to these narrations in tafsīr works commonly known as *tafsīr bi al-māthūr*. Among the most well-known work of this genre is the work of the tenth century CE scholar Imām al-Tabarī's *Jāmi' al-bayān 'an tāwīl āyi al-Qur'ān*. The critiques of this type of *tafsīr* contend that some of these works may not necessarily be concerned with the reliability and the soundness of a *ḥadīth* report; some of the works might have included Judeo-Christian stories. The fourteenth century CE Ibn Kathīr's *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Azīm* can be an exception, as he applied caution when dealing with these stories (Hidayatullah 2014, 25; Saleh 2010, 9–11).
5. At the beginning of the Introduction of *Tafsīr al-manār*, Riḍā clarified that what followed were the excerpts of 'Abduh's lectures in the form of the former's words. 'Abduh's exact words were quoted as "the Imam said" (*wa qāla al-Imām*) and Riḍā's own words would be expressed with, "and I say" (*wa aqūlu*). These can be seen throughout *Tafsīr al-manār*.

6. *Isrā'īliyyāt* are stories that originated from Jewish and Christian traditions and made available in the Islamic tradition due to the contact of these scholars with the Arabs. Among the well-known scholars of *Isrā'īliyyāt* were companions 'Abdullāh ibn Salām and Ka'ab ibn al-Aḥbār. *Isrā'īliyyāt* stories permeated many disciplines of Islamic scholarship such as history where scholars, such as Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (224-311/839-923), documented these stories. Other Islamic disciplines such as rational theology (*kalām*), *ḥadīth* and *tafsīr* were also not spared from such stories. Generally, Muslim scholars view that stories that are contradictory to the Quran and ḥadīth must be rejected; if these stories are not mentioned in the Quran or ḥadīth, Muslims take a neutral stance by not rejecting nor confirming the stories, which usually are historical and not theological in nature (Al-Dhahabī 1990, 13–52; Mattson 2013, 197–201).
7. Examples include: drinking water in which the Quranic verses were immersed to heal illnesses; the belief that carrying the Quran as a charm may protect one from the *jinn* (supernatural beings) and Satan; reciting the Quran with a nice melodious voice without thinking about the messages of the verses - these are considered the worst forms of ignorance (*jāhiliyah*) (Riḍā 1987, 1: 27).
8. Among these are the Egyptians: al-Azhar's rectors Muḥammad bin Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī (1881-1945), a disciple of 'Abduh who wrote *Tafsīr al-marāghī*, and Maḥmūd Shaltūt (1897-1963) who authored *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm: al-ajzā' al-'asharat al-ūlā*; and Muḥammad Mutawallī al-Sha'rāwī (1911-1988) in his work *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*. In Indo-Pakistani region, Amin Ahsan Islahi (1904-1997) wrote his *Mubadi Tadabbur-i-Quran*; and in Southeast Asia, Hamka and his work *Tafsīr al-Azhar*.
9. Unlike what was commonly practiced by Southeast Asian scholars, Hamka did not spend years of training at traditional learning centers in the Middle East. However, he studied with various well-known Indonesian scholars such as H.O.S Cokroaminoto, the leader of the first Muslim socio-political party *Sarekat Islam*; he also studied *tafsīr* from Ki Bagus Hadikusomo, a reformist scholar. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by Cairo's al-Azhar University in 1958 and by the National University of Malaysia in 1974 (Howell 2010, 1031; Sirry 2014, 16–17).
10. Hamka's intellectual formation and open-mindedness to diversity were shaped by his life in Sumatra and particularly in multi-ethnic Medan in the 1930's. "Sumatra was then inundated with global media. Not only would new cultural forms come from the Middle East, but Europe was often filtered through Arabic translations." (Hadler 1998, 134–35).
11. Muhammadiyah is an Indonesian modernist socio-religious movement founded in 1912 and is believed to have more than 30 million members today.
12. Hamka wrote more than one hundred books, including two in Arabic, on various topics such as Islamic studies and history. He also wrote several novels. His romantic novel *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck* was well received by young Muslims despite criticism received from some religious scholars due to its unusual romantic theme.
13. The original name of the mosque was Great Kebayoran Mosques, but in 1961 Shaykh Maḥmūd Shaltūt, the then Rector of Al-Azhār University of Egypt, officiated it and changed the name to Al-Azhar during his visit there (H. H. S. Salim 2012, 86).
14. There were factors supposedly linked to Hamka's arrest: the political debates of the function of the parliament; the questionable political behavior of President Soekarno and his inclination towards communism that were criticized by many, including Hamka. Many members of *Masjumi*, the largest Islamic political party at that time, were also imprisoned (D. P. Salim 2015, 39).
15. Hamka discussed the indispensable role *sunnah* plays in *tafsīr*; it defines and limits the generality of the Quranic rule such as in performing *wudū'* (ablution) (Quran,

- 5:6) in which *sunnah* defines how *wuḍū'* is performed through the practical examples shown by the Prophet. He viewed that interpreting the legal verses without the help from the *sunnah* may risk going against the established *sharī'ah* norms (*keluar daripada syari'at*). An exception, however, is when interpreting on the verses about the natural world, about which the Prophet did not say much; in that case the exegesis must follow current scientific development to make the exegesis stay relevant (Hamka 1984d, 1: 25-26).
16. Hamka divided *Isrā'iliyāt* stories into three categories: a report that corresponds with the story of the Quran and is corroborated by a reliable hadith, in which its role is merely to support the Quranic story rather than to define it; a report that clearly contradicts the Quran and hadith; and a report that does not bring value and benefit to the story of the Quran albeit it does not contradict it (Hamka 1984d, 1: 33-34).
 17. Hamka also referred to modern *tafsīr* works such as *Tafsīr al-marāghī* by Egyptian Ahmad Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī (d.1945), *Tafsīr al-qāsimī al-musammā bi mahāsīn al-tāwil* by Syrian Muḥammad Jamāl al-Dīn b. Muḥammad al-Qāsimī (d.1915), *Tafsīr fi zilāl al-Qur'ān* by Egyptian Sayyid Quṭb (d. 1966) and Indonesian scholars such as Hasbi Ash-Shidieqy (d.1975) and Zainal Arifin Abas (Hamka 1984d, 1: 41-42).
 18. For works on Hamka's interpretation, see Yusuf (1990, 11–49) and Wan Yusuf (2001, 66).
 19. Hamka argued that women in Muslim countries gained equal rights much earlier compared to the women in North America and Europe. Relying on Western writers such as George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), he pointed that English laws transferred the property of a married woman to her husband; in Islam, Muslim women retained her property regardless of her marital status.
 20. He was the cousin of the Prophet Muḥammad, and nicknamed as '*al-ḥibr*' (the doctor) and '*al-baḥr*' (the sea) for being knowledgeable. He was an authority in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), exegesis (*tafsīr*), Islamic inheritance laws (*farā'id*), Arabic language and poetry. It was said that he directly listened ten ḥadīth from the Prophet, and reported many ḥadīth from the great Companions (Qal'ahjī 1996, 1: 10-15).
 21. Bukhari and Muslim narrated several reports on the creation of woman from the rib. Some scholars interpret this report to mean being gentle in dealing with women's emotions and feelings, while some scholars read the ḥadīth literally and concluded women were created out of a rib (Al-Bukhārī 1999, 269, 448).
 22. Since it is very hard to verify the origin of these narrations, many modern Quran interpreters such as Muḥammad 'Abduh, avoided using them in their interpretations.
 23. Bauer traced the genesis of the creation of woman from Adam and, that Eve was created from his left rib from the eighth and tenth century scholars Muqātil ibn Sulaymān and Hūd ibn Muḥakkam al-Hawwārī. This notion was adopted by later scholars throughout history (Bauer 2015, 111–21).
 24. Muḥammad Asad translated *qiwāmah* as 'men shall take care of women'. He explained that "the expression *qawwām* is an extensive form of *qā'im* ("one who is responsible for" or "takes care of" a thing or a person). Thus, *qā ma 'ala al-mar'a* signifies 'he undertook the maintenance of the woman' or 'he maintained her' (see Lane VIII, 2995). The grammatical form *qawwām* is more comprehensive than *qā'im*, and combines the concepts of physical maintenance and protection as well as of moral responsibility..." (Asad 2003, 126).
 25. A woman complained to the Prophet for not having the opportunity to perform *jihād* to which the Prophet replied that her obedience and kindness to her husband equals fighting in the way of God (Al-Munzirī 1997, 3: 34).
 26. Asad explains that *nushūz* may be committed by both the husband and the wife. It is ill-

- will (literally rebellion) that it is any “kind of deliberate bad behavior of a wife towards her husband or of a husband towards his wife, including what is nowadays described as ‘mental cruelty’; with reference to the husband, it also denotes ‘ill-treatment’, in the physical sense, of his wife (cf. verse 128 of this Surah). In this context, a wife’s ‘ill-will’ implies a deliberate, persistent breach of her marital obligations” (Asad 2003, 127).
27. Hamka described that a husband’s *nushūz* is his desertion of love and compassion towards the wife, mostly happening, though not exclusively, in polygamous marriage, or when he is emotionally attached to other woman outside of marriage. The verse, however, does not describe the same punishment for the husband’s ethical and behavioral transgressions during *nushūz* as it describes for wife’s *nushūz* in verse 4:34; rather, it describes that both of them may seek settlement that will solve their conflict and warns them to be fair and kind in their negotiation (Hamka 1984b, 78–83, 1984d, 5: 303).
 28. Brown argues that this particular ḥadīth lacked a chain of transmitters to justify its inclusion in the Ḥadīth collection; however it was narrated in *tafsīr* works since the ninth century CE.
 29. For example, Aisha reported “The Messenger of Allah never beat any of his servants, or wives, and his hand never hit anything” (Ibn Mājah 1999, 2995).
 30. Hamka quoted several *ḥadīth* that show the Prophet’s disapproval of wife beating, “Do not beat Allah’s handmaidens, but when Umar came to the Apostle of Allah and said: Women have become emboldened towards their husbands, he (the Prophet) gave permission to beat them. Then many women came round the family of the Apostle of Allah complaining against their husbands. So the Apostle of Allah said: Many women have gone round Muḥammad’s family complaining against their husbands. They (men) are not the best among you” (Hamka 1984b, 78–79, 1984d, 5: 50-53).
 31. The *ḥadīth* says: “The Apostle of Allah used to divide his time equally and said: O Allah, this is my division concerning what I possess, so do not blame me concerning what Thou possessest and I do not” (Al-Sijistāni 1999, 1380).
 32. Hamka was very critical of the ‘*adat*-based’ polygamy practiced in his native Minangkabau culture. It encouraged men to replace wives who caused an internal rift among the co-wives (Hamka 1984a, 47).
 33. ‘Abduh’s interpretation was based on inter-textual and socio-historical arguments: polygamy was allowed for the early generations of believers because they were ethically-morally sound people who were just to their co-wives. Generations who came after them lacked justice in dealing with wives and children, which caused hardship to society, in which case the ruling of polygamy also changed. ‘Abduh also employed an inter-textual argument by reading *Quan* (4:3) together with *Quran* (4:129), in which he concluded that justice among co-wives was impossible to accomplish thus polygamy was restricted to only those who believed they can be just (Riḍā 1973, 4: 293294-).
 34. The permissibility of European dress was debated between the traditionalists ‘*Kaum Tua*’ and the modernists ‘*Kaum Muda*’. *Fatāwā* were issued by the scholars from both camps to support their arguments (Kaptejn 2009, 177–89).
 35. *Tafsīr bi al-māthūr* is generally defined as a principle of interpretation with the help from the *Quran*, and narrations from the Prophet, his Companions and their Successors. *tafsīr bi al-ra’y* is the principle of explaining the meaning of the *Quran* by exercising one’s own reasoning.
 36. This passage may be translated as “a woman is the pillar of religion, if she is good, the state is also good; if she is dilapidated, the state is also dilapidated. She is the invisible solid pole of a home, if the home is slanted it is a sign the pole is broken”. (translation is the author’s).

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Guidelines

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S*tudia Islamika*, published three times a year since 1994, is a bilingual (English and Arabic), peer-reviewed journal, and specializes in Indonesian Islamic studies in particular and Southeast Asian Islamic studies in general. The aim is to provide readers with a better understanding of Indonesia and Southeast Asia's Muslim history and present developments through the publication of articles, research reports, and book reviews.

The journal invites scholars and experts working in all disciplines in the humanities and social sciences pertaining to Islam or Muslim societies. Articles should be original, research-based, unpublished and not under review for possible publication in other journals. All submitted papers are subject to review of the editors, editorial board, and blind reviewers. Submissions that violate our guidelines on formatting or length will be rejected without review.

Articles should be written in American English between approximately 10,000-15,000 words including text, all tables and figures, notes, references, and appendices intended for publication. All submission must include 150 words abstract and 5 keywords. Quotations, passages, and words in local or foreign languages should

be translated into English. *Studia Islamika* accepts only electronic submissions. All manuscripts should be sent in Ms. Word to: <http://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/studia-islamika>.

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1. Hefner, Robert. 2009a. "Introduction: The Political Cultures of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia," in *Making Modern Muslims: The Politics of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia*, ed. Robert Hefner, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
2. Booth, Anne. 1988. "Living Standards and the Distribution of Income in Colonial Indonesia: A Review of the Evidence." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 19(2): 310–34.
3. Feener, Michael R., and Mark E. Cammack, eds. 2007. *Islamic Law in Contemporary Indonesia: Ideas and Institutions*. Cambridge: Islamic Legal Studies Program.
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5. Utriza, Ayang. 2008. "Mencari Model Kerukunan Antaragama." *Kompas*. March 19: 59.
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7. Interview with K.H. Sahal Mahfudz, Kajen, Pati, June 11th, 2007.

Arabic romanization should be written as follows:

Letters: ' b, t, th, j, ḥ, kh, d, dh, r, z, s, sh, ṣ, ḍ, ṭ, ḏ, ḡ, f, q, l, m, n, h, w, y. Short vowels: a, i, u. long vowels: ā, ī, ū. Diphthongs: aw, ay. *Tā marbūṭā*: t. Article: al-. For detail information on Arabic Romanization, please refer the transliteration system of the Library of Congress (LC) Guidelines.

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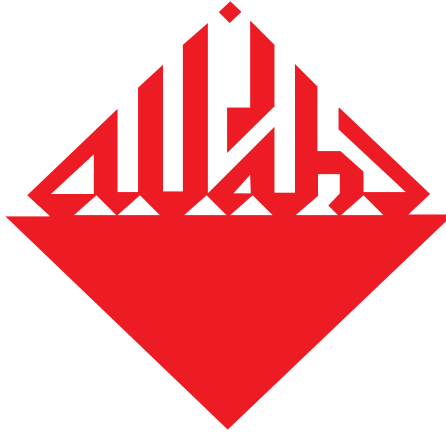
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