

Construction of Indonesian cultural thoughts in tafsir al-Azhar as Hamka's teaching practice; text analysis using George Herbert Mead communication theory

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Abstract

Tafsir al-Azhar is one of the many exegesis books written by Nusantara scholars. Authored by Hamka, this book includes products come in the contemporary era and has attracted many researchers to analyze deeply all of the secrets contained in them. Tafsir al-Azhar contains a number of information related to the elements of Indonesia cultures. But not many of the readers are aware of this fact because of its relatively small capacity. It is the main attraction to be studied in depth in order to know how the construction built by a Hamka related to his Indonesian cultural thoughts contained in Tafsir al-Azhar. Using George Herbert Mead's social communication theory, this research will formulate the construction of the Indonesian cultural commentary constructed by Hamka in Tafsir al-Azhar and prove that the use of elements of Indonesian culture in interpreting the Qur'an is one of the effective strategies to teach about the Qur'anic interpretation to the Muslims in particular, and the Indonesian people in general.

Keywords: tafsir al-Azhar, Indonesian culture thought, social communication theory

Introduction

Recently, the discourse of exegesis scholarship related to the context of Indonesian culture is very rare studied by Nusantara academicians,

especially in the field of Qur'anic and Exegesis scholars. From the substantial review to the study of the manuscripts, all have been stripped down by many researchers using different approaches and methods. These efforts then succeeded in revealing the rich treasures of the interpretation of Indonesian society through the scholars and their books. Although many researchers have conducted studies and research on them and produced different conclusions, this activity is still interesting to do. That is because there are still many hidden things that have not been revealed to the surface of society which related to the wealth of treasures interpretation of Nusantara scholars.

One of the monumental exegetical works written by Nusantara scholars is Tafsir al-Azhar. It has a unique aspect that makes it different from books of exegesis in general. That uniqueness is very closely related to Hamka's position as the interpreter of the archipelago that still holds tightly elements of Indonesian culture in interpreting Qur'anic verses. Despite having lived and studied for a long time in Arab land, his Indonesian character is not lost at all and is still firmly entrenched in him. This is evidenced by the creation of one of the many books ever written by Hamka titled Tafsir al-Azhar.

Hamka does not only present information that comes from the classical books and a number of transmissions, he also presents some information that is loaded with Indonesian socio-cultural. This is a distinctive feature possessed by Hamka as an Indonesia Interpreter. In spite of the fact that the information obtained from Islamic classical books

as well as the narration has a more dominant capacity than the Indonesian-patterned description. But however, this fact is my main interest to reveal more deeply how the construction of Hamka's Indonesian cultural thoughts existed in Tafsir al-Azhar. Because if this little thing is not tried to be appeared by any scholars (especially Indonesian scholars), it will be difficult to be detected by the community or even considered none at all.

Based on these all, I assume that Tafsir al-Azhar contains many elements of Indonesian cultural contexts raised by Hamka as the author. The contextual element in question here is how a Hamka who, despite having obtained much Islamic literatures directly from Mecca, does not at all leave the existing of Indonesian cultural contexts as an explanation of his interpretation of Qur'anic verses. And therefore, I find it necessary to be analyzed just about the different forms of Arabic interpretation that Hamka raises in the book of Tafsir al-Azhar.

Method

George Herbert Mead (1931) formulated a communication theory which he called the theory of symbolic interaction. In this theory, George Herbert Mead formulates three main concepts in the process of human interaction. These three concepts include the realm of society, self, and mind (Morissan 2013: 144). In relation to the communication process Hamka uses Tafsir al-Azhar to the people of Indonesia, then the theory to be used in this study is only the concept of society (society).

Regarding the theory of symbolic interaction in the realm of society, George Herbert Mead says that every interaction between people always involves a relationship between three elements (Mead, n.d.: 4-6):

- a. Signal, is the emergence of the initial gesture of the interaction object.
- b. Response, ie the emergence of responses to the initial gesture.
- c. Result, ie the emergence of the result of the response to the initial gesture.

Biography and academic journey of hamka

Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, or better known as Hamka was born on February 16, 1908' which coincided with 14 Muharram 1326 Hijriah in Nagari Sungai Batang, Maninjau Sub-district, Agam, West Sumatra and died in Jakarta on 24 July 1981 at the age of 73 years (Pramoko 2009: 2). He is the son of Abdul Karim Amrullah and Shafiyah. He was born in a family with a strong religious tradition (Mukhlis 2004: 34).

Since childhood Hamka has been educated by his father who is an intellectual figure in their village. He started his formal education at an elementary school in his village, but only two years. He restarted his formal education at Pesantren founded by his own father called Sumatra Thawalib when he was 10 years old. At the end of 1924 (at the age of 16 years) Hamka went to the land of Java precisely in the area of Yogyakarta. There he became acquainted and learned the movement of Modern Islam to H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto, Kibagus Hadikusomo, R.M. Soerjopranoto, and H. Fakhruddin.

On April 5, 1929 Hamka married a 15-year-old girl named Siti Raham. In the early days of his marriage, Hamka has been active as a member of the organizers of the Muhammadiyah organization in Padang Panjang so that he often travels outside the city. In addition to being active in the Muhammadiyah organization, Hamka is also active as a preacher (*muballigh*) who walks around to fill in the recitation. From the results of his marriage, Hamka blessed with twelve children, two died at a small age and ten others remain alive (Hamka 2017: xii).

Hamka is known as a scholar, poet, writer, and activist. This can be seen from the number of books and other writings in the form of articles or magazines that he wrote for the benefit of the ummah. His son Irfan Hamka says in his book that Hamka has written hundreds of books and thousands of other papers in the form of bulletins or opinions in magazines, national and regional newspapers. Also Hamka's lectures on countless radio and television (Hamka 2017: 242).

The journey of Hamka's life does not always go well. In 1964 he was arrested by "Orde Lama" regime which was presided over by President Soekarno on several counts. Not only that, all the books written by Hamka are also banned (Hamka 2017: 202). He spent two years and four months in jail. During the period of detention Hamka succeeded in completing the writing of Tafsir al-Azhar which he had previously pioneered while still actively filling in the Qur'an commentary in Al-Azhar Mosque in Jakarta. In May 1966 he was released from prison.

The cage for nearly two and a half years in prison did not necessarily make Hamka's career stalled. Afterwards, in 1975 Hamka was inaugurated as Chairman of Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) until May 1981. Until finally Hamka died his last breath in Jakarta on July 24, 1981 at the age of 73 years.

Tafsir al-azhar and its background appearance

Tafsir al-Azhar originated from the regular routine recitation of Qur'anic tafseer by Hamka in Masjid al-Azhar Jakarta in 1959. At that time Haji Yusuf as the administrator of al-Azhar Mosque proposed to Hamka for the contents of his lecture to be wrote and published in monthly magazine "Gema Islam". The proposal was accepted by Hamka and in the end he named his interpretation with Tafsir al-Azhar because it was delivered inside the al-Azhar Mosque. After two years and its loading in the Islamic Gema has reached one and a half juz of Qur'an, starting from juz XVIII (Q.S. al-Mu'minun / 23) to mid of juz XIX (mid QS al-Syu'ara / 26) , a disaster hit Hamka. Precisely on January 27, 1964 he was arrested by Orde Lama regime and held in jail on three charges: (1) Following a dark meeting in Tangerang on October 11, 1963 with the intention of holding a coup and killing of President Soekarno; (2) Traveling to Pontianak with the intention of establishing a subversive movement; (3) Provide lectures at IAIN Ciputat which incites students to rebellion (Mukhlis 2004: 47).

For two years and four months in prison Hamka spent his time to continue writing the book of Tafsir al-Azhar and finish it up to 30 juz.

According to Mukhlis in his book *Tafsir al-Azhar's Inclusiveness*, Hamka did not write Tafsir al-Azhar coherently from the first juz, but it was started from juz 20 to juz 30, and then resumed from juz 1 to juz 19 (Mukhlis 2004: 47). The reason is explained in detail by Hamka in " Muqaddimah "Tafsir al-Azhar juz XVIII. Although this book has been written during the time Hamka was in prison, the writing actually span from the beginning was made until the last revised took 16 years (1962 to 1978).

Tafsir al-Azhar contains various explanatory interpretations. It contains explanations of the hadiths, narrations, clerical opinions, and own opinions of Hamka. Hamka's interpretation models tend not to be rigid and use flowing language. He does not hesitate to incorporate his own experiences and personal stories in order to provide the reader with an easy-to-understand understanding. Not only that, as a writer who also wrestle in the field of literature, Hamka does not hesitate to link explanations of his interpretation with literary traditions that exist in Indonesia. And there are many other things that if examined carefully will be found that Hamka did not abandon the aspects that smelled of Indonesia-an in writing a book, even in interpreting the scriptures though.

The construction of hamka's indonesian cultural thoughts

Construction is defined as an arrangement, model, or layout (Tim Penyusun 2008: 804). The term construction itself is used for different purposes. If associated with a building, then the construction can be interpreted with its constituent materials. In another hand, if associated

with a particular scientific field it can be interpreted as an arrangement or model that forms a certain science object. This type is what will be studied in this research.

As explained earlier, Tafsir al-Azhar has many uniqueness. One of them is the discovery of a number of information that speaks about Indonesian cultural things, which is also a reflection of the person of a Hamka as Nusantara interpreter. This passage does not dominate in the al-Azhar tafsir, but its form is in several places in the whole volume. Therefore, this study will attempt to show a number of examples that are found and sorted by a particular classification.

Associating Interpretation with Indonesian Literature

In addition to presenting descriptive-analytical descriptions, on several occasions Hamka also uses Malay poetry (*pantun*) as one of his tafsir delivery models. An example is when he interprets Q.S. As-Shaffat (37): 48 in order to describe the beauty of the eyes of the angels in heaven later.

وَعِنْدَهُمْ قَاصِرَاتُ الطَّرْفِ عِينٌ

“And with them will be women limiting (their) glances, with large, (beautiful) eyes.”

Concerning this verse Hamka said (Hamka 1985, XXIII: 137):

"Memang sebahagian besar kecantikan perempuan di dalam dunia ini terkumpul pada matanya, pada redup pemandangan dan jelita mata. Rupanya di akhirat pun demikian pula. Tak mengapa jika kita salinkan suatu pantun Melayu tentang kecantikan mata yang dapat menawan:

(Indeed most of the beauty of women in this world accumulates in her eyes, on the dim landscape and beautiful eyes. Apparently in the hereafter as well. It's okay if we duplicate a Malay poetry about eye beauty that can be captivating”):

*Rama-Rama terbang di dusun,
Anak keling bermain kaca,
Bukan hamba mati diracun
Mati ditikam sudut mata”*

Linking Personal Experience to State Political Conditions

In interpreting a verse, Hamka does not hesitate to include stories about his personal experience in order to reinforce the message he wants to convey. One example is when he interprets Q.S. Shad (38): 44 in order to describe the fortitude of Prophet Ayyub 'alaihi as-salam. In his interpretation Hamka narrates his personal experience when he was politically cheated by the Government when he was in jail.

وَحُدُّ بِيَدِكَ ضِعْفًا فَأَضْرِبْ بِهِ وَلَا تَحْنَنْتُ إِنَّا وَجَدْنَاهُ صَابِرًا نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ

“(We said), and take in your hand a bunch (of grass) and strike with it and do not break your oath,” Indeed, We found him patient, an excellent servant. Indeed, he was one repeatedly turning back (to Allah).”

Related to the above verse Hamka said (Hamka 1985, XXIII: 277):

“Di samping kesabaran isteri saya itu saya ingat lagi usaha tiga orang sahabat dan murid saya yang memasuki kantor-kantor dan pejabat berusaha agar saya dapat segera dikeluarkan, namun usaha mereka percuma. Sebab hal ini sudah diatur dari atas oleh politik pemerintah waktu itu yang sudah sangat condong ke kiri (komunis).”

“In addition to my wife's patience I recalled the efforts of three friends and students who entered the offices and officials tried to get me out of business, but their efforts were useless. For this

matter has been regulated from above by government politics at that time who was very leaning to the left (communist). "

Linking to Indonesia's Geographical Condition

In interpreting Qur'anic verses, Hamka is not always bound to provide interpretations relating to the Arab geographical environment in which the Prophet Muhammad spread the teachings of Islam during his lifetime. He seeks to present a picture that is readily digestible by the reader, one of which is by linking it with the geographical conditions of Indonesia. A concrete example can be seen in Hamka's statement when interpreting Q.S. al-Hijr (15): 22 about the drought that hit agricultural land in the dry season. In his statement, Hamka tried to give a description that is in accordance with the natural conditions in Indonesia, namely agricultural land in the form of rice fields and rice plants, not wheat or dates such as in Arabia.

وَأَرْسَلْنَا الرِّيَّاحَ لَوَاقِحَ فَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَسْقَيْنَاكُمُوهُ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ لَهُ بِخَازِنِينَ

"And we have sent the fertilizing winds and sent down water from the sky and given you drink from it. And you are not its retainers".

Related to the above verse Hamka said (Hamka 1985, XIV: 179):

"Demikian juga kalau musim kemarau telah panjang, sehingga sawah-sawah menjadi kering dan padi yang baru akan besar mati karena kering."

"Likewise, when the dry season has long, so the fields become dry and the new rice will die from dry."

Displays Indonesian Terms

In addition to interpreting the Qur'an with reference to Arabic literature, Hamka also often displays terms in both local and Indonesian versions when describing a particular object. For example when he interprets Q.S. al-Nahl (16): 68 concerning instincts or instincts God gives to bees to make nests in the mountains and trees. In the description Hamka mentioned a tree name in West Sumatra known by the people of West Sumatra as the tree "Sialang" as a place that is very preferred bees to make nests.

وَأَوْحَىٰ رَبُّكَ إِلَى النَّحْلِ أَنْ اتَّخِذِي مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا وَمِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعْرِشُونَ

"And your Lord inspired to the bee, "Take for yourself among the mountains, houses, and among the trees and (in) that which they construct".

Concerning the above verse Hamka said (Hamka 1985, XIV: 261):

"Biasalah lebah membuat sarangnya di lereng-lereng gunung agak kelindungan, yaitu di celah-celah batu, "dan dari pepohonan" yang di Sumatera Barat biasa disebut pohon Sialang, yaitu pohon yang disukai sekali oleh lebah membuat sarang."

"The bees make their nests on the slopes of the mountain somewhat, in the crevices of the rocks," and from the trees " which in West Sumatera is called the Sialang tree, a tree favored by bees making nests.

Associating with the History of the Kingdom of Indonesia that existed in the Silam Period

Such an interpretive model can be found in Hamka's statement when interpreting Q.S. al-Hijr (15): 23 about the nature of death where everything will return to God.

وَأِنَّا لَنَحْنُ نُحْيِي وَنُمِيتُ وَنَحْنُ الْوَارِثُونَ

“And indeed, it is We who give life and cause death, and We are the Inheritor”.

Related to this verse Hamka said (Hamka 1985, XIV: 1979):

“Berapa banyak didirikan orang bangunan yang mahal-mahal di bawah kekuasaan raja-raja yang besar. Rajanya mati, bangunannya tinggal. Atau kerajaannya sudah runtuh, meskipun keturunan rajanya masih ada. Seketika kita melihat negeri-negeri yang ada beraja di Sumatera Timur sebelum perang, sebagai istana Sultan Serdang, Langkat, Leidong, dan Kualuh, Kota Pinang dan lain-lain, siapa yang menyangka bahwa yang dilihatnya di tahun 1945 itu, maka di tahun 1965 hanya tinggal reruntuhan saja.”

"How many expensive builders built up under the might of great kings. The king is dead, the building is living. Or his kingdom has collapsed, although the king's descendants still exist. Immediately we see the countries that exist in East Sumatra before the war, as the palace of Sultan Serdang, Langkat, Leidong, and Kualuh, Pinang City and others, who thought that what he saw in 1945, then in 1965 only just ruins. "

Analysis of contextual thinking of hamka

In the previous sub-chapter we have discussed about the construction of Indonesian cultural thoughts of Hamka in Tafsir al-Azhar. Based on certain classifications, it can be concluded that Hamka has a high respect

in explaining his interpretation by using Indonesian cultural things. So that Hamka does not always wrestle with the histories and opinions of the previous scholars, but he also gives some cultural explanation as an additional. And this is what I said as own uniqueness in Tafsir al-Azhar.

In this section I will conduct an analysis using George Herbert Mead's communication theory to read the relevance between Indonesia cultural thoughts of Hamka with the Indonesian people as the readers. It is certain that the writing of Tafsir al-Azhar using Indonesian (Malay) Language is certainly intended to be read by people who understand the language itself, namely the people of Indonesia and some people of the Malay family (Malaysia, Brunei, Thailand). Also the elements of Indonesian culture in it indicate the existence of a separate destination that Hamka intended to the Indonesian people as readers. This goal is to be analyzed using George Herbert Mead's social communication theory.

Theoretically, Tafsir al-Azhar can be categorized as a medium created by Hamka to communicate with readers. Communication is meant here is the process of delivering the message (which in this case is the thought of Hamka's interpretation in Tafsir al-Azhar) to the Indonesian people as readers who understand the Indonesian language. There are three elements that build communication relationships in this analysis, first is Hamka himself as the subject of communication, the second is the use of elements of Indonesia by Hamka in his interpretation as a medium of communication, and the third is the people of Indonesia as the target of communication.

George Herbert Mead (1931) formulated a communication theory which he called the theory of symbolic interaction. In this theory, George Herbert Mead formulates three main concepts in the process of human interaction. These three concepts include the realm of society, self, and mind (Morissan 2013: 144). In relation to the communication process Hamka uses Tafsir al-Azhar to the people of Indonesia, then the theory to be used in this study is only the concept of society (society).

Regarding the theory of symbolic interaction in the realm of society, George Herbert Mead says that every interaction between people always involves a relationship between three elements (Mead, n.d.: 4-6):

- a. Signal, is the emergence of the initial gesture of the interaction object. If this theory is related to Hamka's interaction with Indonesian society, then we can conclude that the initial gesture captured by Hamka from Indonesian society as the object of communication is about their cultural and cultural life. Among the cultural and cultural trends favored by Indonesians is the use of pantun. For Hamka, poetry and mantra is something that is liked and easily understood by the people of Indonesia. Theoretically, then, the tendency of the society can be judged as a signal (reason) of Hamka to include elements of Indonesian-ness in its interpretation
- b. Response, ie the emergence of responses to the initial gesture. In relation to the Interpretation of Hamka in Tafsir al-Azhar, we can conclude that the response that emerges in a Hamka is how to provide an easy understanding of the people who will read his book of exegesis.

One way he used to make it happen was by incorporating elements of Indonesianness in the al-Azhar commentary. And this is theoretically called response.

- c. Result, ie the emergence of the result of the response to the initial gesture. In relation to the interpretation of Hamka in Tafsir al-Azhar, we can conclude that the result of the use of the Indonesian elements in it is the emergence of an easy understanding that attracts the public interest to read it.

Concluding remark

Knowing the construction of the thought of the Indonesian Tafsir of Hamka and analyzing it using George Herbert Mead's theory, it is concluded that as an interpreter of the archipelago, Hamka's Indonesianness is firmly attached to him. Also what Hamka does by incorporating elements of Indonesian-an as an additional explanation in Tafsir al-Azhar is a strategic effort to give readers easy understanding, as well as to lure appeal so that people do not get bored with the explanations he explain. And it is the best teaching explored by Hamka to give an easy understanding for his readers (in this context can be assumed as his students).

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