

The Reception of Hamka's *Tafsir Al-Azhar* within Social Religious Issues in the Malay World

Resepsi terhadap Tafsir Al-Azhar Karya Hamka dalam Isu-isu Sosial Keagamaan di Dunia Melayu

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Abstract

This study explores the reception and impact of Hamka's *Tafsir Al-Azhar* across the Malay world, particularly in Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and Singapore. *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, written by the renowned Malay scholar Hamka, is a significant work of Qur'anic exegesis that has influenced Islamic thought in Southeast Asia. By employing a qualitative research method, specifically a case study with phenomenological analysis, this research investigates how *Tafsir Al-Azhar* has been received, interpreted, and utilized by various Muslim communities in these regions. The study examines the historical context in which Hamka's work was produced, focusing on its dissemination and its pivotal role in addressing socio-religious issues from the mid-20th century to the present day. By applying reception theory, the analysis highlights the dynamic interaction between the text and its readers, revealing how interpretations of *Tafsir Al-Azhar* have evolved in response to shifting social, political, and cultural landscapes. The research also explores the influence of external religious streams, modernity, and globalization on the Malay Muslim identity, and how these factors have shaped the adaptation and reception of traditional tafsir practices. The findings suggest that while *Tafsir Al-Azhar* has become a central reference in the religious life of Malay Muslims, its reception varies significantly across different countries. These variations are influenced by local cultural, religious, and political contexts, as well as by Hamka's personal interactions with these communities. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of Qur'anic interpretation in Southeast Asia, emphasizing the importance of contextualizing tafsir to address the diverse needs and challenges of Muslim communities in the region.

Keywords: *Reception, Hamka, Tafsir Al-Azhar, Social Religious Issues, The Malay World*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas penerimaan dan pengaruh Tafsir Al-Azhar karya Hamka di dunia Melayu, khususnya di Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, dan Singapura. Tafsir Al-Azhar, yang ditulis oleh ulama terkenal Hamka, adalah karya penting dalam penafsiran Al-Qur'an yang telah memengaruhi pemikiran Islam di Asia Tenggara. Dengan menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif, khususnya studi kasus dengan analisis fenomenologis, penelitian ini melihat bagaimana Tafsir Al-Azhar diterima, diinterpretasikan, dan digunakan oleh berbagai komunitas Muslim di wilayah-wilayah tersebut. Penelitian ini juga menelusuri konteks sejarah di mana karya Hamka ini ditulis, dengan fokus pada penyebarannya dan peran pentingnya dalam menghadapi isu-isu sosial-keagamaan dari pertengahan abad ke-20 hingga saat ini. Dengan menggunakan teori resepsi, analisis ini mengungkap interaksi dinamis antara teks dan para pembacanya, serta bagaimana interpretasi terhadap Tafsir Al-Azhar berkembang seiring dengan perubahan sosial, politik, dan budaya. Penelitian ini juga melihat



bagaimana aliran keagamaan luar, modernitas, dan globalisasi memengaruhi identitas Muslim Melayu, serta bagaimana faktor-faktor ini memengaruhi adaptasi dan penerimaan terhadap praktik tafsir tradisional. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun Tafsir Al-Azhar menjadi acuan penting dalam kehidupan beragama Muslim Melayu, penerimaannya berbeda-beda di tiap negara. Perbedaan ini dipengaruhi oleh konteks budaya, agama, dan politik lokal, serta oleh hubungan pribadi Hamka dengan komunitas-komunitas tersebut. Penelitian ini memberikan pemahaman yang lebih dalam tentang penafsiran Al-Qur'an di Asia Tenggara, dengan menekankan pentingnya menyesuaikan tafsir dengan kebutuhan dan tantangan beragam komunitas Muslim di wilayah ini.

Kata Kunci: *Resepsi, Hamka, Tafsir Al-Azhar, Isu Sosial Keagamaan, Dunia Melayu*

Introduction

Tafsir Al-Azhar is a significant work by the Malay scholar Buya Hamka (1908–1981).¹ Written in Indonesian, this tafsir reflects the interpreter's worldview, orientation, and school of thought. Consequently, the expansive nature of the Qur'an as a source of knowledge can sometimes be limited by the interpreter's perspective. Hamka openly acknowledges his adherence to the Salaf school, which follows the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, his companions, and the scholars who succeeded them. He emphasizes that he does not merely conform to prevailing human opinions but selects those interpretations closest to the truth, avoiding views that tend toward deviation. Hamka also understood that producing a tafsir involves direct engagement with readers who will explore the exegetical work. He envisioned a diverse readership with different backgrounds becoming students or followers of his tafsir. To address this, Hamka presented *Tafsir Al-Azhar* with interpretations that are neither too complex and profound for scholars nor too simplistic and unengaging for the general public.²

The influence of Hamka's works, particularly *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, extends beyond Indonesia into the broader Malay world, encompassing Malaysia, Brunei, and Singapore. On August 5, 2017, the Hamka Library and Guest House were inaugurated in Sungai Besar, Selangor, with 80% of Hamka's 134 works now part of the library's collection. Additionally, the National Library of Malaysia holds 97 titles of Hamka's works published within the country. Hamka's significance in Malaysia is further highlighted by his recognition as a key Malay thinker at the Institut Alam dan Tamadun Melayu (ATMA) at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM).

The publication of Hamka's books in Malaysia and Indonesia has been strengthened by a collaboration between Republika Publishers and PTS Publishing House, which distributes to readers in Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam,

1 Rosnani Hashim, "Hamka: Intellectual and Social Transformation of the Malay World," in *Reclaiming the Conversation: Islamic Intellectual Tradition in the Malay Archipelago*, ed. Rosnani Hashim, 1st ed. (Kuala Lumpur: The Other Press, 2010), 187–205.

2 Ibid.

Thailand, Saudi Arabia, and beyond.³ However, the influences of external tradition on the Islamic community in the Malay world, particularly through modernity and globalization, poses challenges to the continuity of the traditional Malay religious identity and its interaction with local culture. As a result, the sources of religious reference for the Malay Muslim community have evolved significantly. Today, the range of religious tafsirs available in the Malay world, especially in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei Darussalam, is diverse, reflecting various schools of thought and perspectives. Historically, since the spread of religious literacy in the 15th and 16th centuries, distinct tafsirs addressing socio-religious issues have emerged in the Malay region, including *Tafsir Tarjuman al-Mustafidh*, *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*, and *Tafsir Al-Azhar* itself.

Therefore, researching the changes and dynamics of religious literacy, especially *tafsir* in the Malay world, is compelling due to its connection with religious literacy and the social and cultural phenomena in this region, particularly regarding the dynamics and reception of Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar*. This study is intriguing to analyze using reception theory, which suggest that the reception of a *tafsir* undergoes changes in responses, interpretations, and evaluations by readers across different periods. This theory is particularly relevant because the reception of a *tafsir* involves the reader's perspective directly interacting with the text, influenced by surrounding social phenomena. Examining the reception of this *tafsir* is especially interesting in light of the strong presence of religious streams from outside Southeast Asia, each offering its views and perspectives on community issues.

This study seeks to clarify the distribution and reception of Buya Hamka's *Tafsir Al-Azhar* in addressing socio-religious issues within the Malay countries of Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, and Singapore. The reception of a tafsir involves the reader's perspective, which is directly influenced by the surrounding social phenomena. In this context, the Qur'an is perceived not only as a theological scripture but also as a sacred text that fulfills the religio-socio-cultural needs of its adherents.⁴ While a scripture may proclaim its divine status and sanctity, it is also expected to be recognized as holy and followed as guidance by its believers. Therefore, studying scripture necessarily involves examining the perceptions of those who regard it as such.⁵

3 Agus Setiawan, "Anggota DPR Di Malaysia Dirikan Rumah Pustaka Buya Hamka - ANTARA News," ed. Monalisa, *Antaranews.Com*; Syahrudin El-Fikri, "Penerbit Malaysia Terbitkan Karya Buya Hamka," *News.Republika.Co.Id*; Dyah Ayu Pitaloka, "Buku Karya Buya Hamka Diminati Penerbit Negeri Jiran," *Jatimnet.Com*.

4 Ahmad Rafiq, "The Reception of the Qur'an in Indonesia: A Case Study of the Place of the Qur'an in a Non Arabic Speaking Community" (Temple University, 2014).

5 Ibid., 11.

This study employs a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach to examine natural objects in their natural state. Data collection is conducted repeatedly to gather accurate and in-depth information necessary for understanding the meaning or significance of behavior. The phenomenological study involves immersing oneself in the unique roles, behaviors, and experiences of individuals as they define, interpret, and construct their world.⁶ This phenomenological approach is then analyzed using reception theory, which posits that the reception of a *Tafsir* will undergo changes in responses, interpretations, and evaluations by general readers across different texts and periods.

This study contributes to the development of *tafsir* studies in Southeast Asia by examining how a *tafsir* work is accepted and utilized as a reference within the religious literature of Muslim communities, as well as how it addresses their social and religious issues. Additionally, the study offers a methodological contribution to *tafsir* studies, particularly regarding the rich and diverse Nusantara *tafsir*, by applying critical analysis through interdisciplinary theories from fields such as literature, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and other disciplines. This approach enriches and broadens the scope of Islamic studies, especially in the context of *tafsir* studies in Southeast Asia.

Reception of Qur'anic Interpretation: An Epistemological Framework

Reception, derived from the English word “reception,” refers to the act of receiving or the activity of acceptance.⁷ Reception theory emerged as a significant trend in literary research in the 1960s, developed by the Constance School in Germany. This school of thought built upon the research of Ingarden's phenomenology, Prague Structuralism by Mukarovsky, and Gadamer's hermeneutics. Consequently, reception theory shifted the focus of literary research from analyzing text structures to examining how texts are received by readers.⁸ Hans Robert Jauss (1921-1997), a prominent German literary theorist, significantly influenced literary studies through his work in reception theory. He focused on how readers' responses, interpretations, and evaluations of texts evolve over time, challenging traditional approaches to literary analysis.⁹ In the context of interpretation, reception refers to how a text is accepted or received by a reader, who interprets its meaning influenced

6 James P. Spredley, *Metodologi Etnografi*, trans. M. Zulfa Elizabeth (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana Yogya, 1997).

7 Frederick C. Mish, *The Meriam-Webster Dictionary* (Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster Inc, 2004).

8 Yoseph Yapi Taum, *Pengantar Teori Sastra*, 1st ed. (Flores: Nusa Indah, 1997).

9 Hans Robert Jauss and Elizabeth Benzinger, “Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory,” *New Literary History* 2, no. 1 (1970): 7.

by their social background. Literary works are recognized through the realization of transformations and the embodiment of readers' responses to the text. Variations in textual transformations indicate intensive reception, which can be traced in other texts, reflecting the historical dynamics of aesthetic reception.

Peter Werenfels, as quoted by Goldziher, argued that when reading the Holy Qur'an, each reader seeks its theological system, which aligns with their religious understanding, orientation, and tendencies.¹⁰ The Qur'an reveals its miraculous elements through the universality of its meaning and its enduring applicability across different times and places. Interpretation offers opportunities for understanding the scriptures, provided it remains within the substance of the text. For the interpretation of the Qur'an to be accepted and understood by society, especially by those interested in interpretation, a specific approach like reception theory is needed. This theory explains how the Qur'an is received and embraced, particularly in studies like this one on Hamka's interpretation. By using reception theory, an individual's acceptance or reception of the Qur'an is understood through the reading process, where meanings and interpretations are formed. These interpretations are influenced by the reader's background and the social realities in which they live. However, according to Asna, the reception approach in the living Qur'an method remains stagnant, lacking in-depth critique beyond simple analysis with three patterns of reception.¹¹

Reception of the Qur'an and Tafsir in the Malay World

The Malay Muslim community, spread across Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and Singapore, regularly uses the Qur'an and its exegesis (*tafsir*) as essential references in daily religious practices.¹² According to Riddell, early Muslim communities in Southeast Asia favoured Arabic-language *tafsirs* such as *Tafsir Jalalain*, *Tafsir al-Baidhawī*, and *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, which were highly popular.¹³ However, as subsequent Qur'anic exegeses emerged from diverse socio-cultural contexts, the religious intellectual process led to the development of *tafsirs* and translations in the Malay language. Federspiel notes that these early translations and distinctive characteristics of *tafsirs* in local languages were particularly sensitive in the early

10 Ignas Goldziher, *Muslim Studies* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, n.d.).

11 Asna and Amin, "Hermeneutics of Reception by Hans Robert Jauss: An Alternative Approach Toward Qur'anic Studies."

12 A. H. Jhon, "Islam in South-East Asia, Problem of Perspective," in *Reading on Islam in South-East Asia* (Singapore: ISEAS, 1985).

13 Peter Riddell, "The Use of Arabic Commentaries on the Qur'an in the Early Islamic Period in South-East Asia: Report on Work in Progress," *Indonesia Circle. School of Oriental & African Studies. Newsletter* 18, no. 51 (1990): 3–19.

years of Islam in the Malay world.¹⁴ For instance, an early Malay-language *tafsir*, an anonymous work on *Tafsir Surah al-Kahfi* [18]:9, believed to be from the 16th century, is now housed at the Cambridge University Library with catalog MS Ii.6.45. Later, *Tarjuman al-Mustafid* by Abd Rauf as-Singkili, the first complete 30-juz *tafsir* of the Qur'an in the Nusantara, was written in 1675 CE.¹⁵ Malay *tafsirs* continued into the 20th century, as evidenced by *tafsir Nūr al-Ihsān* by Kedah-Malaysia scholar Syekh Muhammad Sa'id bin Umar al-Qadhī, although this work is less known in Indonesia and Malaysia compared to *Tafsir Jalālain* and *Tafsir al-Baidhāwi*.¹⁶

The rapid development of *tafsir* in Southeast Asia, particularly in the 20th century, saw notable *mufasssirs* in Indonesia, including A. Hassan, Haji Rasul, Bisri Musthofa, Bahrum Rangkuri, and Munawar Chalil, and in Malaysia, Muhammad Yusuf To' Kenali, as well as Direk Kulsirswaad in Thailand. In more contemporary periods, significant figures include Mahmud Yunus, Hamka, H.B. Jassin, M. Dawam Rahardjo, M. Quraish Shihab, and Jalaluddin Rakhmat.¹⁷ Among these, *Tafsir al-Azhar* stands out as one of the most prominent. According to Ervan, Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, or Buya Hamka, is celebrated as one of the most influential Muslim figures in Southeast Asia. Steenbrink, as cited by Ervan, places Hamka alongside Hamzah Fansuri, a prominent 16th-century Malay Sufi scholar and poet, as “two giants” in Indonesian Islamic literature.¹⁸ Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar* is regarded as one of the most resource-rich and original modern *tafsirs* in the Muslim world, remaining the most influential work on Qur'anic exegesis in the Malay-Indonesian world.

Since *Tafsir al-Azhar* was written in classical Malay, it has been more warmly received among Malay-speaking communities in Sumatra, Singapore, and Malaysia than in Java. Hadler notes that Hamka's efforts to modernize Muslim society have had a global influence, impacting new generations of Muslim thinkers in the Malay world. Quoting Stowasser (1998), Hadler describes this as a “new epistemology” influenced by the late Fazlur Rahman (1919–88) and further developed by Amina

14 Howard M. Federspiel, “An Introduction To Qur'anic Commentaries in Contemporary Southeast Asia,” *The Muslim World* LXXXI, no. 2 (1991): 149–161.

15 Ervan Nurtawab, “The Problems of Translation in Turjuman Al-Mustafid: A Study of Theological and Eschatological Aspects,” *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 18, no. 1 (2011): 33–60.

16 Ervan Nurtawab, “Qur'anic Translations in Malay, Javanese and Sundanese A Commentary or Substitution?,” in *The Qur'an in the Malay-Indonesian World: Context and Interpretation* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 39–57.

17 R Michael Feener, “Notes toward the History of Qur'anic Exegesis in Southeast Asia,” *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 5, no. 3 (1998): 47–76.

18 Ervan Nurtawab, “Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, or Buya Hamka, or Hamka,” *Handbook of Qur'anic Hermeneutics* 4 (2023): 325–333.

Wadud-Muhsin and Abdullah An-Na'im. Hadler argues that older Qur'anic exegesis is outdated and does not adequately address modern complexities, with different approaches to the Qur'an reflecting various paradigms regarding women among different Muslim groups.¹⁹

According to Feener, the creative integration of elements from Muslim modernism may have culminated in the comprehensive work of *Tafsir al-Azhar* by Hamka, which emerged in its complete form as one of the most vigorous efforts in modern Qur'anic exegesis, not only in Southeast Asia but also in the broader Muslim world.²⁰ The logical argument presented explains why other contemporary *tafsirs* have not achieved the same level of acceptance and dissemination in the Malay world. *Tafsir al-Azhar* has long been a reference material for studies and even part of the curriculum in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools). Its ability to capture the market, along with its modern characteristics—such as adopting modern exegesis relevant to social issues, clear and accessible language, and straightforward presentation understood by all segments of society—has made *Tafsir al-Azhar* both popular and widespread.

Dissemination of Tafsir al-Azhar in the Malay World

The history of Hamka's writing of his *Tafsir Al-Azhar* began on Monday, the 12th of Ramadan 1383 AH, corresponding to January 27, 1964. Shortly after delivering a lecture to approximately 100 congregants at the Al-Azhar Mosque, Hamka was arrested by the authorities of the old regime and placed in custody.²¹ As a political prisoner, he was moved between several rest houses in the Puncak area, including Herlina Bungalow, Harjuna Bungalow Brimob Megamendung, and the police detention room in Cimaean. During his confinement in these locations, Hamka had ample opportunity to write his *Tafsir Al-Azhar*. Due to declining health, he was later transferred to the Friendship Hospital in Rawamangun, Jakarta. Even during his treatment at the hospital, Hamka continued working on his *Tafsir Al-Azhar*.²²

Tafsir al-Azhar by Hamka is considered one of the significant works in the interpretation of the Qur'an in the Malay world. While not exclusively written in


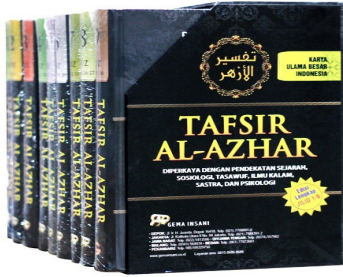
19 Hadler, "Home, Fatherhood, Succession: Three Generations of Amrullahs in Twentieth-Century Indonesia."

20 Feener, "Notes toward the History of Qur'anic Exagenesis in Southeast Asia."

21 Hadler, "Home, Fatherhood, Succession: Three Generations of Amrullahs in Twentieth-Century Indonesia."

22 Jamarudin, May, and Pudir, "The Prospect of Human In The Exegetical Work: A Study of Buya Hamka's Tafsir Al-Azhar Ade."

Malay, the Malay world interpretation encompasses a variety of languages. These interpretations are authored by scholars from Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, and Singapore, and are written in several languages. For example, Arabic works include *Marāḥ Labīd* by Nawawī Banten, and Malay-Indonesian works feature *Tafsir al-Furqan* by A. Hassan, *Tafsir al-Azhar* by Hamka, and *Tafsir al-Mishbah* by M. Quraish Shihab. Other notable works include *Tarjumān al-Mustafid* by ‘Abd al-Raūf Singkel, which is an Arabic-Malay interpretation; *Tafsir al-Huda* by Bakri Syahid in Javanese; *Qur’ān al-Adhimi* by Haji Hasan Mustapa in Sundanese; and *Tafsir Bahasa Boegisnja Soerah Amma* by Anre Gurutta H. M. As’ad in Bugis.²³ Additionally, there are Malay-language *tafsirs* such as *Tafsir Pimpinan al-Rahman* by Sheikh Abdullah Basmeih, *Tafsir Janzabil* by Abdurrahman Haqqi from Brunei Darussalam, *Tafsir al-Bayan* by Ismail Luthfi, a scholar from Thailand, and *Tafsir al-Qur’an* (Singapore edition) by Ahmad Sonhaji Muhammad, published by Pustaka Qalam in Singapore in 1960.²⁴

	
<p>Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (1908-1981)</p>	<p>Tafsir Al-Azhar GIP Version</p>

Hamka’s scholarship is highly respected both in Indonesia and internationally, earning him honorary titles such as Doctor Honoris Causa from institutions in Cairo, Egypt, and Malaysia. His *Tafsir Al-Azhar* is one of the most popular and widely sought-after *tafsir* books in Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, and Singapore. According to Ervan, Hamka was conscious that his writing—both in language and content—

23 Islah Gusmian, *Khazanah Tafsir Al-Qur’an Indonesia: Dari Hermeneutika, Wacana Hingga Ideologi* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Salwa, 2003).

24 Hasani Ahmad Said, “Mengenal Tafsir Nusantara: Melacak Mata Rantai Tafsir Dari Indonesia | 205,” *Refleksi* 16, no. 2 (2017): 205–231.

would primarily be accessible to specific Muslim groups, particularly Malay-speaking communities. As a result, his commentary addresses the concerns most relevant to his target audience in various aspects of their lives. Additionally, he deliberately avoids interpretations that might provoke disputes among people. This approach is particularly significant given that the commentary was written in a new context: non-Arabic-speaking countries where the majority of the population is Muslim. Furthermore, there was a rapidly growing demand for Islamic materials, especially for understanding the Qur'an, but access to such materials in Arabic was limited.²⁵

In the Malay world, Buya Hamka became known through his religious books and novels. His works were published by several publishers in Malaysia, with "*Sufisme Modern*" being among his most famous. In the 1960s, Hamka earned various nicknames in Malaysia, reflecting his popularity, such as "Indonesian Islamic poet," "renowned writer," "famous Indonesian commentator," and "notable religious writer in Indonesia." Hamka's influence in Malaysia was significant; his wise words were frequently quoted in Malay newspapers, serving as motivation for the community. Local newspapers also provided information about his planned visits to different locations on the Malay Peninsula, including details about his lectures. Hamka's fame was such that a Malaysian citizen once wrote to a newspaper asking for Hamka's address in Jakarta, hoping to correspond with him.²⁶ His name was also well-known among dignitaries. Malay rulers in Malaysia, for example, invited him to deliver lectures in their country. In 1974, Hamka was awarded an honorary Doctorate degree (Doctor Honoris Causa) from the National University of Malaysia, conferred by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Abdul Razak, who was also an advisor to the university. In his speech, Tun Abdul Razak stated that Hamka was not only a pride of Indonesia but also of Southeast Asia. Four decades later, in mid-2017, further appreciation was shown when a member of parliament from Sungai Besar, Selangor, established the Hamka Guest House and Library, which holds around 100 titles of Hamka's books.

Through his public appearances and narratives, Buya Hamka introduced Indonesia to a broader Malay audience beyond Indonesia while also familiarizing Indonesian viewers with the world of Malaysia. According to Mun'im Sirry, *Tafsir Al-Azhar* is considered the "most influential Qur'anic interpretation in Malaysia-Indonesia."²⁷ Biographer James Rush, in his book *Adicerita Hamka*, stated that

25 Nurtawab, "Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, or Buya Hamka, or Hamka," 331.

26 Michael Laffan, "Straight from Mecca: Medan, Hamka, and the Coming of Islam to Indonesia," *The Postcolonial Moment in South and Southeast Asia* (2019).

27 Mun'im Sirry, "What's Modern about Modern Tafsir? A Closer Look at Hamka's Tafsir Al-Azhar," in *The Qur'an in the Malay-Indonesian World*, ed. Majid Daneshgar, Peter G. Riddell, and Andrew Rippin (New

in *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, “modern Indonesia is fully embedded in the global Muslim community and its history. The history of Islam is the history of Indonesia, and so is the story of Hamka.”²⁸

The first publication of *Tafsir Al-Azhar* occurred after Buya Hamka’s release from Sukarno’s regime prison, with the process directly supervised by Hamka himself. The initial release, covering Juz 1-4, was published by Pembimbing Masa under the leadership of H. Mahmud in 1978. The second publication, encompassing Juz 15-30, was handled by Pustaka Islam, Surabaya, while the remaining Juz 5-14 were printed by Yayasan Nurul Islam, Jakarta. After the complete 30-juz edition was published, *Tafsir Al-Azhar* saw various editions, ranging from Pustaka Panjimas, Jakarta, to a publisher in Singapore, Pustaka Nasional. Currently, Al-Kautsar publishers have reissued *Tafsir Al-Azhar* along with other works of Hamka in a 10-volume edition sized A3. Eventually, *Tafsir Al-Azhar* became widely published by Gema Insani Press, a national publisher in Jakarta, which holds the official publication license for this tafsir to this day. According to the publisher, from the first edition to the current 12th edition, *Tafsir Al-Azhar* by Gema Insani Press has been printed in 200,000 copies. These copies are distributed not only in Indonesia but also in Malaysia, Brunei, and Singapore. Even though editions exist in Malaysia and Singapore, they remain under the publishing license of Gema Insani Press (GIP).²⁹

Reception of Hamka’s *Tafsir* in the Malay World

This research utilizes Jauss’s pattern and approach to classify the reception of the *Tafsir Al-Azhar*. According to Jauss, readers experience three stages after receiving a text: the stage of understanding, interpretation, and application.³⁰

Stage of Understanding

The stage of understanding in this reception theory emphasizes that a reader reaches this level during their first reading of a text. At this stage, a reader engages in a dialogue with themselves and interacts with the text, often bringing pre-understandings that they compare after interacting with the text. Jauss, in agreement with Gadamer as quoted by Paris, considers the “first reading” as the initial impression gained during reading. This first reading can also be seen as a reservoir of

York: Routledge, 2016), 200.

28 James R. Rush, *Adicerita Hamka: Visi Islam Sang Penulis Besar Untuk Indonesia Modern*, trans. Zia Anshor, 2nd ed. (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2018).

29 Suci (Publication Officer GIP), *Online Interview*, August, 1, 2024

30 Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Hans Robert, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

understanding that serves as the basis for building comprehension in future readings.³¹ The understanding stage allows the reader to form a dialogical relationship with the text, influenced by their pre-existing knowledge before advancing to the next stage. At this stage, Hamka's *Tafsir* has been widely used as a reference in scholarly works and studied to address religious social issues such as leadership challenges, conflicts, interfaith relations, spirituality, and the philosophy of life. In Malaysia, research on Hamka is particularly interesting because of his close connection with the Malay community as kinfolk.³² Here is an interview with Dr. Md Noor Hussin from UIS Malaysia:

"The research I discussed mainly involves researchers from Malaysia, such as those from USIM, Industri Malaya, and UTHM. Given the limitations, I am only presenting a few examples. For instance, there is a study by Abdul Hafiz on social justice according to Hamka in Tafsir Al-Azhar. Another study focuses on the interpretation of aqidah in Surah Al-Fatiha based on Tafsir Al-Azhar. Additionally, Siti Rohaya (2008) discussed women according to Hamka in Tafsir Al-Azhar. There is also research on the concept of Islamic medicine in Tafsir Al-Azhar by Nazira Ahmad (2017) and on the methods of da'wah according to Hamka in Tafsir Al-Azhar".³³

The popularity of Hamka's *Tafsir* extends beyond Malaysia, reaching Brunei Darussalam and Singapore as well. Although it may not be the sole reference for tafsir, Hamka's *Tafsir* is still found in homes and suraus (prayer halls) in Brunei Darussalam and Singapore. Brunei Darussalam is particularly noted for its vibrant Islamic studies community. Below is an interview with Dr. Harapandi, a lecturer and preacher in Brunei Darussalam:

"In Brunei Darussalam, studies of religious matters predominantly focus on the content aspects within the tafsir itself. Research themes in Brunei resemble academic syllabi, with studies examining the influence of Hamka's interpretations on thought, as well as the influence of other commentators on Hamka's tafsir. There are also comparative studies between Hamka's tafsir and others. Additionally, many studies delve into methodologies in interpretation."³⁴

However, the reception of Hamka's *Tafsir* among the Malay Muslim community in Singapore is not as widespread as it is in Indonesia and Malaysia.

31 David Parris, "Reception Theory: Philosophical Hermeneutics, Literary Theory, and Biblical Interpretation" (University of Nottingham, 1999).

32 Khazri Osman et al., "Expert Consensus on Educational Concepts According to Hamka and Its Alignment with Practices in Malaysia," *International Journal of Religion* 5, no. 3 (2024): 484–493.

33 Md. Noor Hussein (Academic), *Interview and Focus Group Discussion* at the International Conference, UIS Malaysia, August 13, 2023.

34 Harapandi Dahri (Academic and Preacher), *Interview* at KUPU SB, Brunei Darussalam, August 17, 2023.

According to Amin, while the community in Singapore still accepts and understands Hamka's *Tafsir*, it is used as a religious reference and source of literacy in the field of tafsir by the Malay Muslim community. Furthermore, Hamka, as a notable figure in Muhammadiyah, serves as a reference in religious aspects and the Muhammadiyah organization in Singapore.³⁵ Thus, the reception of Hamka's *Tafsir* at the understanding stage, where it is used as a reference in social and religious issues, is not only carried out by academics in universities and higher education institutions but also serves as study material for religious preachers in Malay countries. Hamka's *Tafsir* continues to be a popular alternative religious reference alongside the proliferation of Arabic-language tafsirs, many of which have already been translated.

Interpretation Stage

In the interpretation stage of reception theory, readers of a text develop their own interpretations, allowing them to provide explanations that are simpler and more accessible than reading the text directly. However, these interpretations often tend to be partial and perspectival. Generally, the Qur'an is not merely a passive text that receives a set of practices but also an active text that offers meaning.³⁶ This context provides an opportunity to interpret a tafsir work, including Hamka's *Tafsir*. The interpretative reception of Hamka's *Tafsir* manifests in both physical and non-physical forms. Non-physically, it involves criticism and interpretation by the authors of Hamka's *Tafsir*. Physically, it is reflected in the discovery of translations of Hamka's *Tafsir*, both in Malay in Malaysia and in other languages, as well as in the form of Hamka's encyclopedias. Therefore, translated works and collections of encyclopedias in the form of physical books can be categorized as reception in the form of physical interpretation. This section will elucidate the forms of interpretative perception, both physical and non-physical.

- 1) Translation of Tafsir Al-Azhar

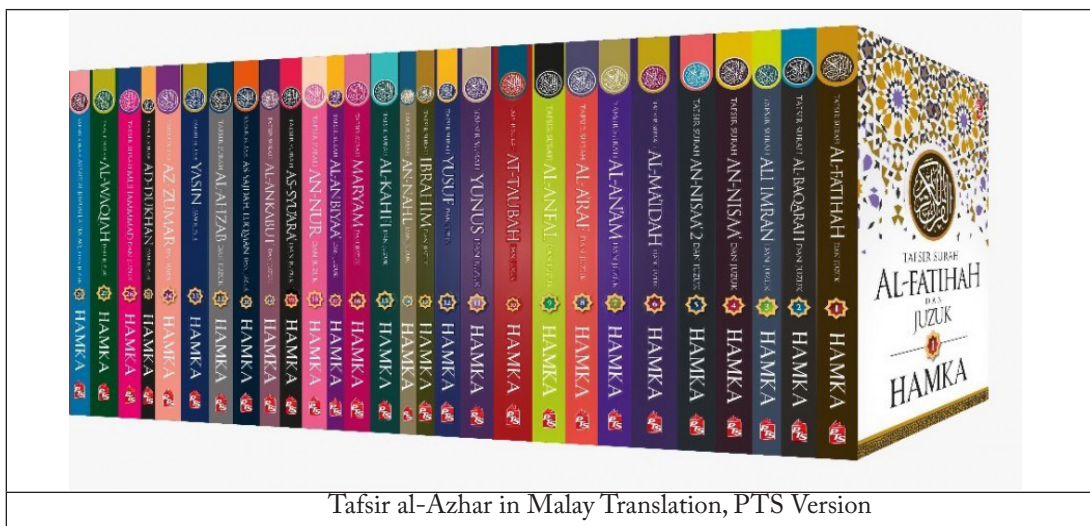
The translation of *Tafsir al-Azhar* by Buya Hamka into Malay, published by Malaysian publishers, represents an effort to adapt the language and culture of the text to the readers. Hamka's popularity in Malaysia has fueled a strong desire among the translation team to present *Tafsir al-Azhar* in a language closely aligned with the Malay people. Translators often clarify words that may not be understood by the readers, and the transition and rephrasing of terms used by Hamka, often in his native

35 Syafruddin Amin (Akademic) *Interview and Focus Group Discussion* at MIC Singapore, August 18, 2023

36 Ahmad Rafiq, "Living Qur'an: Its Texts and Practices in the Functions of the Scripture Living Qur'an: Teks Dan Praktik Dalam Fungsi Kitab Suci," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 22, no. 2 (2021): 2548–4737.

Minangkabau language, represent an interpretive effort in tafsir. The translation activities of the Qur'an in the Malay world have continued without interruption, with local scholars producing various tafsir works, translations, and handwritten Qur'anic texts. However, due to their limited distribution, these works are less recognized in the development of tafsir studies.³⁷ Prof Jamaluddin, a tafsir lecturer from the Department of Qur'an and Hadith at the National University of Malaysia (UKM), mentioned that Hamka's tafsir has been printed in several editions in the Malay language. Translating the tafsir into Malay poses its own challenges because some complex terms used in Hamka's tafsir need to be carefully translated into Malay.

"The strength of HAMKA's interpretation of the Qur'an lies in his meticulous explanations of Qur'anic verses, elucidating intended meanings with eloquent and captivating language, and connecting verses to the socio-cultural realities of the Malay Archipelago. His interpretation is further enriched by historical, sociological, Sufi, theological, literary, and psychological approaches"³⁸.



Tafsir al-Azhar in Malay Translation, PTS Version

In this context, the translation of Buya Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar* into Malay by Malaysian publishers represents an effort to make the text accessible to a wider audience. This endeavor involves translators engaging deeply with the language used by scholars and adapting it to fit the linguistic and cultural context of the readers. According to Lukman, translating the Qur'an into a widely spoken language within

37 Wardatun Nadhiroh and Wardani, "The Dynamics of Qur'anic Text and Translation in Banjar Ulema's Works," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-ilmu al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 24, no. 2 (2023): 205–230.

38 Jamaluddin (Lecturer), *Interview*, in the FGD on the Reception of Hamka's Tafsir at the Department of Qur'anic and Sunnah Studies, UKM Malaysia, August 14, 2023.

a community ensures its integration with local religious and literary culture. This process not only encourages the production of new works of tafsir but also reinforces the significance of established writings.³⁹

- 2) Encyclopedia of Buya Hamka

Another form of interpreting Hamka's *Tafsir* is the publication of the Buya Hamka Encyclopedia. This encyclopedia has been published by an editorial team under the auspices of Suara Muhammadiyah, in collaboration with the Buya Hamka Study Center (PSBH) at UHAMKA Jakarta. Led by Rifma Glulam Dzaljad, the editorial team includes co-editors and a group of entry writers composed of academics, admirers, and followers of Hamka in Indonesia. The encyclopedia has been released in two volumes: Volume 1 was published in 2020, and Volume 2 followed in 2022 under the title "Buya Hamka Encyclopedia: Sparks of Thought, Interpretation, Understanding, and Authentic Imagination of Buya Hamka." The encyclopedia, prefaced by Prof. Dr. H. M. Amin Abdullah, also includes greetings from the Hamka family, including his son Drs. H. Afif Hamka, the Rector of Muhammadiyah University Prof. Dr. Hamka, Prof. Dr. H. Gunawan Suryoputro, M.Hum, the Vice Chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) Dr. H. Anwar Abbas, MM, M.Ag, and the Coordinating Minister for Human Development and Culture Prof. Dr. Muhadjir Effendy, M.A.P.

The editorial team's efforts in creating the Buya Hamka Encyclopedia involved constructing a narrative and justification, including the objectives, background, methods, and selection of entries. The primary reason for creating the Buya Hamka Encyclopedia is to reintroduce the works and thoughts of Buya Hamka in a popular and accessible format. In the introduction, the editors explain:

"Hamka's writings encompass not only religious matters but also extend to historical issues. Despite not being an academician with formal higher education, Hamka's expertise is widely recognized by the public and internationally. This breakthrough step is crucial for preserving and disseminating Hamka's ideas, which appear to remain relevant and needed by a wide audience in the future, both in Indonesia and the broader Malay world⁴⁰.

The Buya Hamka Encyclopedia is crafted through a careful blend and arrangement of excerpts from Buya Hamka's books, maintaining the authenticity

39 Fadhli Lukman, *The Official Indonesian Qur'an Translation: The History and Politics of Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahnya*, OpenBook Publishers, 2022, 21.

40 Rifma Ghulam Dzaljal and et al, *Ensiklopedia Buya Hamka: Percikan Pemikiran, Penafsiran, Pemahaman Dan Imajinasi Autentik Buya Hamka*, vol. II (Jakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah, 2022), i.

and distinctive style of Hamka's storytelling and discussion. The publication of this encyclopedia is categorized as an interpretation due to the formulation and compilation efforts made by the editorial team to group, unearth, and collect entries, resulting in a monumental work. Even Buya Hamka's son, Afif Hamka, expressed hope that the Buya Hamka Encyclopedia would broaden readers' understanding of the various ideas, thoughts, interpretations, understandings, and imaginations of Buya Hamka.⁴¹ Moreover, this effort is expected to provide readers and admirers of Buya Hamka with added spiritual energy, a zest for life, a spirit of struggle, and a deep respect for Buya Hamka's personality.⁴² Thus, the editorial team aims to revive the values advocated by Buya Hamka in his works through this encyclopedia. Despite being a collection of entries, the encyclopedia preserves the originality of Buya Hamka's works. Amidst the evolving socio-cultural challenges and the influx of various religious literacies, the editorial team seeks to rekindle the spiritual admiration for Hamka by presenting his works in a new, accessible format through this encyclopedia.

- 3) Critique of Hamka's Tafsir

Acceptance in the form of interpretation also includes critiques of the interpretation. Through critique, a reader seriously engages with a work and its ideas, developing their own interpretation of the object or topic being critiqued. Criticism and objections to thoughts, including interpretations within Islamic scholarship, are natural and expected. Fundamentally, no human creation is perfect, as perfection belongs only to Allah SWT. Common objects of criticism discussed by scholars and enthusiasts of *Tafsir Al-Azhar* include the interpretation of specific words, the methods, and the systematic approach used by Buya Hamka.

One of the criticisms of *Tafsir Al-Azhar* focuses on the interpretation of the term "Ad-dakhil" within the Qur'an, particularly in Hamka's interpretation. This critique inspired Dr. Muhammad Irfan Risnal Lc. MA, a young scholar from West Sumatra who recently completed his doctoral program at Al-Azhar University in Egypt, to examine this interpretation in his thesis titled "*Ad-dakhil fi Tafsir Al-Azhar limufassir Andunisi Buya Hamka*." Dr. Irfan explains that "Ad-dakhil," in terms of terminology, refers to an interpretation that cannot be justified or contains erroneous evidence. "Ad-dakhil" may include fabricated hadiths, very weak hadiths, incorrect understandings, or unreasonable stories. However, the presence of "Ad-dakhil" in an

41 Dzaljal and al, *Ensiklopedia Buya Hamka: Percikan Pemikiran, Penafsiran, Pemahaman Dan Imajinasi Autentik Buya Hamka*, vol. II, p. .

42 Budi Johan (Manager, PSBH), *Interview*, PSBH Building, Uhamka Postgraduate School, August 14, 2023.

interpretation does not necessarily indicate a flaw in the work itself.⁴³ In fact, famous tafsir books such as *Tafsir Ibnu Katsir*, *Tafsir Atthabari*, and *Tafsir Al-Qurthubi* also contain “Ad-dakhil,” which is common. Including “Ad-dakhil” in a tafsir aims to enrich the scholarly discourse.

Additionally, other studies have critiqued the chain of narration (*sanad*) and the content (*matan*) in Buya Hamka’s *Tafsir al-Azhar*. Many hadiths are used in his interpretation, sometimes in his own language, and occasionally he includes only part of a hadith’s content. This study, conducted by Zuna Atikah, titled “Quality of Hadith in the Book *Tafsir al-Azhar* (Criticism of the Chain of Narration and Content of Hadith in Surah al-Fath),” found that there are 16 hadiths in Surah al-Fath in *Tafsir al-Azhar*. Using library research methods, particularly the classification of hadiths found in Surah al-Fath in the book *Tafsir al-Azhar*, Atikah assessed and critiqued the chain of narration and content of hadiths not found in the Sahih Bukhari and Muslim collections. She concluded that out of the 16 hadiths in Surah al-Fath in *Tafsir al-Azhar*, 11 hadiths are of Sahih quality (Hadiths 1, 2, 4, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 16). One hadith (Hadith 16) is of Da’if quality due to a weak narrator, and four hadiths (Hadiths 3, 5, 6, and 8) are not found in the nine canonical collections of hadith, with their quality being unknown.⁴⁴

Academics in Malaysia have also conducted critical studies on Hamka’s *Tafsir*. One such study is Halim’s dissertation, titled *Hamka dan Tafsir Al-Azhar: Suatu Kajian Kualitas Hadis*. In his research, Halim noted that many hadiths used in the tafsir were not recognized for their quality in terms of being Sahih, Hasan, Da’if, or Mutawatir. However, he concluded that many hadiths in *Tafsir al-Azhar* could still be used as valid evidence compared to those that could not.⁴⁵ In contrast, serious critical studies are not prevalent among readers of *Tafsir al-Azhar* in the Muslim communities of Brunei and Singapore. In these two countries, where academic dynamics and dialectics are not as vibrant as in Malaysia and Indonesia, religious literacy and sources often rely on policies set by the Sultan in Brunei Darussalam and the fatwas of MUIS (Majlis Ugama Islam Singapore) for the Muslim community in Singapore. According to Kamaluddin, Dean of Usuluddin at UNISSA, Brunei’s government policies regarding religious sources refer to popular Arabic and Malay tafsirs such as *Jalalain*, *Ibn Kathir*, and *Tafsir al-Azhar*. As a result, *Tafsir al-Azhar*

43 Muhammad Irfan Risnal, “Ad-Dakhil Fiy Tafsir Al-Azhar Limufassir Andunisi Buya Hamka” (Universitas Al-Azhar Kairo Mesir, 2015).

44 Syarifah Ruysdah, “Kajian Kualitas Hadis Dalam Tafsir Al-Azhar,” *Ushuluna : Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin* (Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta 1444, 2021).

45 MA Halim, “Hamka dan Tafsir Al-Azhar: Suatu Kajian Kualiti Hadith” (Universiti Sains Malaysia, 2007), <http://eprints.usm.my/8148/>.

is accepted without criticism in Brunei, unlike the academic critiques found in Indonesia and Malaysia.⁴⁶

4) Reinterpretation of Hamka's Tafsir

This reinterpretation serves as a response from admirers, loyal followers, and even Hamka's family to the criticisms directed at his ideas, thoughts, preaching activities, and daily life. In fact, criticisms of the interpretations in Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar* have been addressed by his students, admirers, and family members on various occasions through writings and meetings, both widely and in more intimate settings.

There are several issues related to Hamka's interpretations and thoughts that require reinterpretation and clarification, including topics such as the hijab, the expression of Merry Christmas, and issues with the Sukarno regime, as mentioned in the preface to his *Tafsir*. Some of these issues, like the hijab, have been addressed through research, while others, such as the Merry Christmas greeting, have become part of public understanding and discourse. The following explanations will explore the reinterpretation aspects of these issues.

The issue of the hijab is one that has engaged the attention of scholars and admirers of Hamka's work. Numerous studies have been conducted on Hamka's interpretation and opinion regarding the hijab, as found in Surah Al-Ahzab verse 59. Among these studies are "Penafsiran Tentang Jilbab dalam Al-Qur'an Surah Al-Ahzab (33) Ayat 59 Menurut Buya Hamka Pada Tafsir Al-Azhar" by Fitrah Sugiarto (2021)⁴⁷ and "Critical Discourse Analysis dalam Kajian Tafsir Al Qur'an: Studi Tafsir Al-Azhar Karya Hamka" by M. Munawan (2018).⁴⁸

Based on the two aforementioned studies, researchers argue that Hamka's interpretation in his *Tafsir* does not clearly explain the concept of the hijab, leading to differences of opinion and interpretation among readers and researchers. This issue has sparked disagreements and varying interpretations among social media users, attracting their interest in commenting and leading to debates. One statement on the matter came from Hamka's family member, Naila Fauziah. Here is her statement:

"Hamka wrote in the sub-chapter "Jilbab in Indonesia" when interpreting QS. Al-Ahzab verse 59, "In the verse we interpret here, it is clear that the form or style of clothing is not specified by the Qur'an. What the Qur'an emphasizes is clothing

46 Kamaluddin (Academic), *Interview and Focus Group Discussion* at Unissa Brunei, August 15, 2023

47 Fitrah Sugiarto, M. Nurwathani Janhari, and Husnul Hotimah, "Penafsiran Tentang Jilbab Dalam Al-Qur'an Surah Al-Ahzab [33] Ayat 59 Menurut Buya Hamka Pada Tafsir Al-Azhar," *Madinah: Jurnal Studi Islam* 7, no. 1 (2020): 118–128.

48 M. Munawan, "A Critical Discourse Analysis Dalam Kajian Tafsir AlQur'an: Studi Tafsir Al-Azhar Karya Hamka," *TAJIDID* 25, no. 2 (August 21, 2018): 155, <https://riset-iaid.net/index.php/tajdid/article/view/303>.

that shows faith in Allah SWT, clothing that reflects decency, not attire that displays the body to attract men”⁴⁹.

Abdul Hadi, Buya Hamka’s grandson, responded by asserting that Buya Hamka provided flexibility regarding the hijab, reflecting the ongoing tradition of Islamic society. According to Hadi, Buya Hamka was very moderate on this issue, whether the hijab referred to a headscarf or a face veil. These differences and debates indicate a need for further clarification. Hamka did not explicitly state that the hijab is obligatory, but he outlined the criteria for clothing in Islam, including modesty, not accentuating body shape for men, not displaying adornments except those visible (such as rings on fingers, face, and hands), and wearing a headscarf (*kudung*) that extends to cover the chest.

Another issue that requires clarification and re-examination is Hamka’s opinion on prohibiting the saying of “Merry Christmas.” This belief has become common among some Islamic communities in Indonesia, where every Christmas celebration, Hamka’s misunderstood opinion resurfaces among those who believe that saying “Merry Christmas” is forbidden. This issue was clarified by Abdul Hadi, the son of the former chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and Buya Hamka, who denied that his father prohibited saying “Merry Christmas” to Christians. Abdul Hadi stated:

“In the fatwa issued by Buya in 1981, its contents do not prohibit greeting Merry Christmas or declare it forbidden. Instead, what Buya prohibited was participating in Christmas worship. He explained that the intent of his father’s ruling was that Muslims are prohibited from participating in the worship ceremonies of other communities that celebrate Christmas, such as singing in churches, lighting candles, or any activities considered part of Christmas worship”⁵⁰.

Application Stage

The stage of application involves manifesting practical actions as a consequence of interpretation, which can also broaden the reader’s horizon of understanding and experience in connection with the experiences of others.⁵¹ This stage involves not only the practical implementation of a figure’s work in theoretical concepts and understanding but also in applying ideas and teachings in daily life.

49 Naila Fauziah Hamka (Hamka’s Family), *Interview*, PSBH Building, Uhamka Postgraduate School, August 14, 2023.

50 Abdul Hadi (Buya Hamka’s grandson), *Interview* at his residence in Duren Sawit, East Jakarta, October 18, 2023.

51 Asna and Amin, “Hermeneutics of Reception by Hans Robert Jauss: An Alternative Approach Toward Qur’anic Studies.”

The popularity of Hamka is reflected in the widespread recognition of his interpretations, such as *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, and his other works, which are published by local publishers in Malaysia and Singapore. Hamka is frequently invited to deliver religious lectures for Muslim communities in Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. In Malaysia, he has also been requested to conduct sessions on "Islamic Lectures" on Radio Television Malaysia (RTM). The recognition of Hamka's work in Southeast Asia is further demonstrated by the inauguration of the Hamka Library and Guest House in Sungai Besar, Selangor, on August 5, 2017, by local parliament members. Eighty percent of the 134 titles of Hamka's works are part of the library's collection, and the State Library of Malaysia houses 97 titles of Hamka's works published in Malaysia. Hamka's renown in Malaysia also establishes him as a prominent Malay intellectual at the Institute of Malay World and Civilization (ATMA), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). Additionally, the publication of Hamka's books in Malaysia and Indonesia has led to a collaboration between Republika Publisher and PTS Publishing House to cater to readers' interests abroad, including in Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, and other regions.⁵²

Acceptance in the form of application and implementation of Hamka's interpretation concepts is evident not only through the creation of special Islamic preaching programs and broadcasts titled "Tafsir Hamka," but also through the establishment of study institutions such as the Hamka Centre at IIUM Malaysia, an institution that popularizes and actualizes Hamka's thoughts and works globally. Hamka's ideas are also used as references and foundations in issuing religious fatwas in Indonesia and Malaysia. In Indonesia, there is a fatwa from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) regarding the prohibition of Muslims saying "Merry Christmas," while in Malaysia, Hamka's thoughts are used as sources and references in issuing fatwas, including the Selangor Mufti's fatwa regarding Muslims saying "Happy Holidays" to followers of other religions, along with other religious fatwas and policies.

The acceptance of Hamka's interpretation is also reflected in the naming of universities and Islamic boarding schools. In West Sumatra, two Islamic boarding schools bear Buya Hamka's name: Pondok Pesantren Hamka in Padang Pariaman and Pondok Pesantren Buya Hamka in Sungai Batang Maninjau. Additionally, Universitas Muhammadiyah Hamka (UHAMKA) in Jakarta is one of the Muhammadiyah universities in Indonesia. The selection of this name is grounded in the philosophy and reasoning that the thoughts of Buya Hamka serve as the foundation for the

52 Setiawan, "Anggota DPR Di Malaysia Dirikan Rumah Pustaka Buya Hamka - ANTARA News"; El-Fikri, "Penerbit Malaysia Terbitkan Karya Buya Hamka"; Pitaloka, "Buku Karya Buya Hamka Diminati Penerbit Negeri Jiran."

development of the institution. This demonstrates how the application of a figure's work, particularly Hamka's interpretation, forms the basis for practice in preaching, religious policy, and the growth of educational institutions. By continuously being applied in social and religious life, a figure's work becomes enduring.

The popularity and application of Hamka's tafsir in Singapore, similar to other Malay communities, are evidenced by its continued reprinting by Singaporean publishers. Pustaka Nasional Singapore has published this tafsir up to its ninth edition as of 2013.⁵³ In Brunei Darussalam, the reception of Hamka's tafsir primarily involves its incorporation into specialized topics in mosque studies, where it has become popular. According to Dahri, the predominantly Malay Muslim community in Brunei also uses the tafsir as a key religious reference.⁵⁴

Interpreting the Impact of Hamka's Tafsir in the Malay World

The research examining the reception of Hamka's interpretation among Malay Muslim communities in Southeast Asia—particularly in Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and Singapore—highlights shared linguistic and cultural heritage, as well as similarities in religious literature and ideologies. The understanding and acceptance of Hamka's interpretation vary across these countries, influenced by his personal interactions and visits during his lifetime.

In Malaysia, where Hamka frequently visited, his interpretation remains highly popular, even more so than in Indonesia, where diverse religious ideologies and interpretations exist. In Java, for instance, urban communities, which lean towards modernism, are more inclined to follow Hamka's interpretations, while traditional communities prefer interpretations by local scholars in their native languages. This contrasts with Malaysia, where religious ideologies are less dynamic, and Malay-language interpretations are more widely accepted.

In Brunei and Singapore, the reception of Hamka's works is positive, especially in Brunei, where studies on al-Ghazali and Sufism are prevalent. However, Hamka's interaction with Brunei was limited, and in Singapore, his interpretations have been well-received, as evidenced by their publication in this multicultural nation.

When it comes to interpretation, Indonesian Muslim communities engage dynamically with Hamka's works, often interpreting, critiquing, and compiling them into encyclopedias. This dynamic interaction is evident in the diverse interpretations

53 "Tafsir Al-Azhar (Jilid 1-10) [Kulit Tebal] : Pustaka Nasional, Providing the Best Quality Products for the Malay/Islamic Community," accessed August 7, 2024, https://pustaka.com.sg/kedai/index.php?main_page=product_info&products_id=1.

54 Harapandi Dahri (Academic and Preacher), *Interview* at KUPU SB, Brunei Darussalam, August 17, 2023

of Hamka's views on topics such as the hijab. In contrast, such dynamic interpretations are less prevalent in Malaysia and Brunei, with only Malaysia showing significant efforts in translating and adapting Hamka's interpretations into Malay, representing a form of interpretive reception.

The application of Hamka's works is particularly prominent in Indonesia and Malaysia, where his interpretations are deeply integrated into daily life, religious outreach programs, and educational institutions. Hamka's thoughts and interpretations are preserved and celebrated in the form of foundations, schools, and even museums, both in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Tafsir al-Azhar stands out as a significant tafsir in the Malay world, alongside other regional Malay-language tafsirs. Though presented in Indonesian, which has Malay roots, it is also available in Malay translations. Hamka's understanding that a tafsir reflects the commentator's worldview and school of thought underscores how his interpretation of the Qur'an, while narrowing its broad knowledge base, remains accessible and engaging for both scholars and lay readers. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how tafsirs, contextualized by the social and cultural backgrounds of their recipients, offer interpretations relevant to their specific issues and contexts in Southeast Asia.

Conclusion

The Tafsir Al-Azhar by Sheikh Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, widely known as Hamka, stands as a monumental work in the landscape of Indonesian-language Qur'anic exegesis, cherished across Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and Singapore. Its accessibility in language and depth in meaning have made it a preferred reference among both the general public and scholarly circles. Hamka's mastery of not only the auxiliary sciences of Qur'anic interpretation but also the literary and modern sciences, has earned him significant recognition, including honorary titles such as Doctor Honoris Causa in Cairo, Egypt, and in Malaysia. This widespread acknowledgment of Hamka's scholarship underscores the profound impact of his work, particularly Tafsir Al-Azhar, which continues to be a key resource in Islamic thought and practice within Southeast Asia.

The reception of Hamka's Tafsir Al-Azhar can be understood through the framework of Jauss's reception theory, which outlines three stages: understanding, interpretation, and application. This research has classified the reception of Hamka's work in Southeast Asian society according to these stages, revealing how individuals, communities, and institutions engage with his interpretations. The study highlights how Tafsir Al-Azhar is referenced in religious lectures, fatwas, scholarly works, and

educational institutions. In terms of interpretation, the Malay society in Southeast Asia has engaged with the text by translating it into Malay, compiling encyclopedias, critiquing, and even reinterpreting its meanings to align with contemporary contexts. The application of Hamka's interpretations is evident in the digitalization of his exegesis and the establishment of social and educational institutions that not only bear his name but also embody the mission and philosophy inspired by his religious and social thoughts.

However, this study leaves room for further exploration. One potential area of research is the impact of digital media on the dissemination and reception of Tafsir Al-Azhar in contemporary Southeast Asia. Additionally, a comparative analysis of how Hamka's interpretations stand alongside other modern tafsirs in the region could provide deeper insights into the evolving religious landscape. Moreover, investigating how younger generations in Southeast Asia engage with Tafsir Al-Azhar in the context of modern education and global cultural exchanges could shed light on its relevance and adaptation in a rapidly changing world. These areas represent valuable opportunities for future research, offering the potential to enrich the understanding of Hamka's lasting influence on Islamic thought and practice in Southeast Asia.

Supplementary Materials

The data presented in this study are available in [insert article or supplementary material here] (Usually the datasets were analyzed from library research can be found in the whole data references).

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Authors' contributions

All listed authors contributed to this article. S.R. wrote the original draft, reviewed and edited it, and wrote the formal analysis, compiled the resources, conceptualised the study, and managed the project administration. Z and N was responsible for the methodology and validation and supervised the project

Data availability statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Conflicts of Interest

None of the authors of this study has a financial or personal relationship with

other people that could inappropriately influence or bias the content of the study.

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