

QUR'ANIC SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN AL-AZHAR INTERPRETATION

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Abstract

This research proves that Hamka, in Interpretation Al-Azhar, supports the concept of Transformative Islam by: *first* reinterpreting important Islamic theology with interpretations that makes speculative theoretical debates in Islamic theology more applicable to arousing human awareness of their role on earth; *Second*, it supports Islam's alignment with social, economic and political conditions and considers it to be as important as the Godhead in Islam. *Third*, Formulating Islamic transformation action through *Ta'muruna bi al ma'ruf, tanhawna 'an al-munkar, and tu'minuna billah*, but more emphasis on *tu' minuna bil Lah*.

Keywords: Transformation, Social, Qur'anic, Hamka

INTRODUCTION

In mid-July 2018, the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) released the percentage of poverty in Indonesia which stood at 9.92 percent as of March 2018. This figure is the lowest since the year 1999.¹ In BPS notes, since 2011 the poverty rate has been in the 2 digit range. Respectively 12.36% (2011), 11.66% (2012), 11.46% (2013), 10.96% (2014), 11.13% (2015), 10.70% (2016), and 10.12% (2017). Despite a significant decline, the data still shows a significant number of those who are still in poverty. Figures 25.95 million people are classified as few. But with these maximum criteria, we do not close our eyes to the majority of those who are still classified as poor, or vulnerable to the poor category. According to the Minister of PPN /Head of Bappenas, Bambang Brodjonegoro, those who are vulnerable to poverty are at 69 million.²

On the other hand, the human development index (HDI) which measures human development in three areas: 1) age of life, knowledge, and standard of living. These three main components are seen as decisive for the potential to increase welfare. Based on BPS data, life expectancy in 2017 increased to 71.06 years or 0.16 years longer when compared to the life expectancy of babies born in the previous year. Likewise, the expectation of school term in 2017 will be 12.85 years (Diploma I). That number is 0.13 years longer when compared to children of the same age in 2016. Meanwhile, in 2017 the Indonesian people fulfill their daily needs with an average per capita expenditure of Rp10.66 million per year. The expenditure increased by Rp. 22,000 compared to the previous year.³

Behind this fact, the public is still confronted with Islamic discourse that is more colored by debate *furu'iyah* than *ushuliyah*.⁴ The debate *Furu'iyah* originated from a variety of different opinions, especially in the tradition of thought *fiqh*. The difference in the problem of *furu'iyah* is a difference that is not fundamental in Islam. Each different opinion has an argument (proposition) that is a reference. The difference between one opinion and another is not the difference between right and wrong, but the difference between right and right. The attitude towards *furu'iyah*

¹ <https://ekonomi.kompas.com/read/2018/07/16/130732026/bps-maret-2018-percentage-poverty-indonesia-the>

² <https://finance.detik.com/news-economy-business/d-4052738/69-million-wni-susceptible-to-be-poor->

³ Data Badan Pusat Statistik 2017.

⁴ *Fihiyyah* Rules are rules categorized as rules which are outside the norms the principal. While this rule is also often referred to as the branch rule (translation of the word *far'un*) of the basic rules. The scholars have agreed with five basic rules. Unless there are scholars who add it so that there are six rules. Ibn Nujaim of the Hanafi school of thought in his book *Al-Asyabah wa al-Nadhair* mentions six basic principles with one additional principle, they are *La Tsawaba Illa bi al-Niyat*, (there is no reward except with intention). In his book which is divided into two discussion of the principle of the basic rules and nineteen other rules. Ibn Nujaim, *Al-Asyabah wa al Nadhair* (Damascus: Daar al Fikr, 1983); Ade Dedi Rohayana, *Qawa'id Al Fiqhiyyah dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Perbedaan Pendapat Fuqaha* (Jakarta: PPS UIN Jakarta, 2008), 61.

differences is to accept differences as part of diversity which is essentially the same. The thing to avoid is that differences do not *furu'iyah* have an effect on religious divisions.⁵

Furu'iyah differences are addressed by justifying all that is different, while differences in *ushuliyah* need to have an attitude of tolerance that allows without justifying. Not the other way around, addressing the first type of difference with hatred and contradiction, on the contrary the second type of difference is someone so friendly, tolerant, and accommodating, sometimes even mentioning all the differences are the same and true.

In the eyes of the world, Islamic countries are still wallowing in quite complex economic and social issues. In recent weeks, Turkey has been plagued by a currency crisis that has plunged freely to the level of 6.4323 per US dollar, or dropped 15.88 percent. This level is the lowest level in the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Regardless of the social and political situation behind it, Islamic countries or other large Muslim populations are not over with problems.⁶

The various conditions above are summarized in a large discussion about the condition of Islam in general with the colors of backwardness, dependence and powerlessness that are still dominant. According to Moeslim Abdurrahman, the great current of modernization and development ideology has forced humankind in various religious and state divisions in a situation that does not all benefit. The main cause is modernization which tends to be blind to the effects it causes.⁷

METHODS

In this research, there are several important steps that can be taken. This research is a development of previous studies. Therefore, this research is a type of descriptive analytic (research descriptive research),⁸ which is a study that describes data, facts, and trends that occur, which are then analyzed and recommended on what must be built to achieve a situation. However, in terms of objects, this research is included in the type of library research.⁹ In terms of its purpose, this research is

⁵ Nur Robi Wahidah, Nasoikhatul Mufida, Anita Roja, dan M. Khoirul Hadi al-Asy ari, "Fiqh Toleransi dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an Departemen Agama RI", *Jurnal Maghza*, Vol I, No. 2 (2016)

⁶ <https://ekonomi.kompas.com/read/2018/08/20/143108026/krisis-financial-turki-kehilangan-sepertiga->

⁷ Billionaire Moeslim Abdurrahman, *Islam Transformatif* (Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 1997), 17 .

⁸ Burke Johson & Larry Christensen, *Educational Research Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Approaches* (Boston: Pearson Education, 2004), 437.

⁹ Sumardi Suryabrata, *Metodologi Penelitian* (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 2006), 18. Materials and written sources used in the research are books, encyclopedia, journals, theses and other documents that are in accordance with the principle of the recency and the principle of relevance (relevance). Abuddin Nata, *Metodologi Studi Islam*, Cet. VIII (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 2003), 125.

explorative,¹⁰ as an effort to find factually, accurately and systematically against facts and data about the concept of social transformation.

Based on the type of research, the appropriate approach is a functional approach. The functional approach works with an emphasis on the benefits for the academic community and education practitioners. The functionalism approach sees the interrelation between the function of society and culture. Culture is not a material phenomenon, because it does not stand on things, humans, behavior, or emotions.¹¹ In the context of this study, the functionalism approach looks at whether social change and transformation encourage the birth of a new perspective.¹² This approach requires efforts and steps to achieve that goal.

Data sources used in this study are of two kinds, that is primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources are books that examine this discussion, that is regarding social transformation, especially those related to religious thought (as a *literature review*). In addition, the primary sources in this study were also extended to sources of information directly related to the research topic including sources obtained from observations and interviews.¹³ But this research is analytical descriptive so interview is only used as part of the purpose of exploratory research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Transformative Paradigm in Al-Azhar's Interpretation (Beyond Theological Debate)

Before discussing how Hamka goes beyond theological debate¹⁴ to bring about transformational Islam, it is necessary to first discuss how the relationship between theological debate in Islam and transformative Islam and how the two can be considered mutually deny and also support each other.

In fact, religion and its theology can never be separated. Although there is an assumption that there is a reality that Islamic theology is not grounded and does not provide solutions to social problems such as injustice, poverty, ignorance, and oppression, still removing the theology from religion to achieve it is not a solution.

¹⁰ Muhammad Nazir, *Metode Penelitian* (Jakarta: Ghalia Indonesia, 1998), 66-74.

¹¹ Made Saihu, *Merawat Pluralisme Merawat Indonesia: Potret Pendidikan Pluralisme Agama Di Jembrana-Bali* (Yogyakarta: DEEP PUBLISH, 2019), 286.

¹² In the view of functionalism, a *functionalist viewed culture as a collection of integrated parts that work together to keep a society functioning*. Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia CD-ROM, 2001, entry "Functionalism".

¹³ Interview is a form of data collection to collect or obtain data that may include facts, knowledge, concepts, opinions, perceptions or evaluations related to the focus of problems studied in research. So the purpose of the interview is to obtain information to explain a particular situation or condition, and to complete a scientific investigation. Nana Syaodih Sukmadinata, *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan* (Bandung: Rosdakarya, 2006), 216.

¹⁴ Theology is a collection of any doctrine prepared coherently regarding the nature of God and his relationship to humanity and the universe. Lorens Bagus, *Kamus Filsafat* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2000), 1090.

Religion without theology is not religion. The drying up of Islamic theology from solutions to social problems does not mean that Islamic theology must be eliminated, but rather it means that Islamic theology must be re-understood and it does not have to mean offering a new understanding of established Islamic theology, but it can also restore the initial understanding of Islamic theology that has been buried under the rubble of Islamic civilization which is indeed very large and very complex.

In his book, *From the Aqeedah to the Revolution*, Hassan Hanafi said that the human relationship with God is not only theoretical and speculative knowledge, but also on a practical level. Human relations with God must be able to introduce humans to their responsibilities towards the contemporary conditions of colonialism, backwardness, coercion, authoritarianism, poverty, misery, division, humiliation, and weakness. Man's relationship with God is not living alone in the corner of the house of worship and relinquishing responsibility from various problems, both in dreams and in reality; rather it is responsible for overcoming various problems in life, overcoming disasters, seeking solution for various crises and disasters.¹⁵

The method used by Hamka is named after the respected neonates by Yvonne Y. Haddad, who is trying to establish Islamic social rules in the contemporary world through the Qur'anic approach in a clear manner. Without being burdened by traditional, historical, linguistic, and philological interpretations of the past. They allow specific verses to be directed to individuals and society in their existential movement. In this context, the Qur'anic record provides validation and justification for the revolution as authentic Islam. The mission of Muslims is not to accommodate the Qur'an's instructions to borrow social systems; even the revelation itself provides a revolutionary ideology to transform and liberate society from the slavery of the human system.¹⁶

The main points of Islamic theology are: a) analysis of the concept of God; b) ontological and cosmological evidence about God's form; c) free will, determinism, fate, goodness, badness, punishment and reward; d) the prophetic position, Sufism, and heirs of the prophet; e) the relationship of reason and revelation; and f) the political aspects of the application of Divine law in society.¹⁷ All of these discussions have no direct and significant impact on the social, economic and political life of Muslims. Therefore, Muslims are alienated from their own religion. Theology of a religion is the most basic and the most basic thing that does not have a strong relationship with the real life of Muslims every day. The sophistication of the subject matter of Islamic theology is not useful when dealing with the reality of poverty, oppression, injustice, and ignorance that is the reality faced by Muslims every day. There is even an allegation that the points of Islamic theology were actually used by

¹⁵ Hassan Hanafi, *Dari Akidah ke Revolusi* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2003), xxi-xxii.

¹⁶ Yvonne Y. Haddad, "the Qur'anic Justification for Islamic Revolution: the View of Sayyid Quthb", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (1983): 17.

¹⁷ John L. Esposito, *Ensiklopedi Oxford Dunia Islam Modern*, Jilid 5 (Bandung: Mizan, 2002), 14.

certain parties to strengthen their authority or vice versa, seize power from other parties. Both of them use Islamic theology out of place.

The reality of oppression, poverty and underdevelopment is not the destiny before which Muslims must surrender or let it happen. Muslims must change this by changing themselves and changing the affected society. Today's religion may not agree with all that happening, but today's religion also seems like there is no movement to prove its dissonance. Though all the prophets were sent to fight against oppression and unite those who are oppressed and poor to fight oppression and poverty and fight for their welfare. The prophets first invited people to believe that truth exists and that the peak of truth is God. The God who is believed to be God is Just and dependent on everything. Therefore, if there is injustice on earth, then it must be eliminated without fear of anyone and to anything because only God is the dependency of everything.

After that, the prophets invited the oppressed to believe in holiness, equality of rights and obligations, and the brotherhood of humanity. Therefore, when the prophets and the oppressed will later achieve what they aspire, there will be no revenge for what they once experienced because it is contrary to holiness, equality of rights and obligations, and the brotherhood of humanity. History records how the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) continued to respect those who were hostile to him and expelled him from Mecca when Muslims conquered the city of Mecca. Prophet Musa (as) was sent to free the Children of Israel from the oppression of Pharaoh. Jesus was sent to free the people from the clutches of oppressing leaders and religious leaders.

Religion must have answers to the problems of life such as millions of poor people who struggle to get out of poverty, millions of workers are oppressed, women are abused, children are exploited, people live in slums, ethnic minorities are oppressed, religious minorities are deprived of their human rights, the majority hit the minority, access to education is difficult, while rich people enjoy all the facilities including their facilities to damage the earth for the sake of wealth alone. Ironically now, Islam which was once triumphant with a civilization full of amazing cities, material prosperity, and technical sophistication, is now in a grim poverty and acute economic backwardness. The art of commerce and entrepreneurship are respected and praised in Islam brought by a prophet who is also a successful merchant, lost almost without trace in today's Islamic civilization. This is a problem that must be solved by Islamic civilization.¹⁸

In the early days of Islam, it emerged in Mecca to become a great and respected force in Medina, so it was not yet apparent that there was a debate that confronted the absolute power of God with human autonomy or between God's destiny and human freedom, especially between Jabariyah and Qadariyah.

¹⁸ Ali A. Allawi, *Krisis Peradaban Islam: Antara Kebangkitan dan Keruntuhan Total*, Terj. Pilar Muhammad Mochtar (Bandung: Mizan, 2015, 334).

However, in fact it is an issue that haunts every religion that has a personal concept of God. It was noted that it was not only Islam that was afflicted with similar problems, but Christians too were.

The recording of the Koran against debates similar to the above is the response of the Koran to the concept of absolute power that previously existed in society in the Arabian Peninsula. When Islam emerged, the people's understanding of the highest authority capable of changing and influencing human life was *al-dahr*, time. That is what is recorded in QS. [45]: 24:

وَقَالُوا مَا هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا يُهْلِكُنَا إِلَّا الدَّهْرُ وَمَا لَهُم بِذَلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ
إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ

And they say: There is no life but the life of our world, at first we were not there, then we life, and nothing destroys us but time. And there is nothing for them in such a thing. Nothing else, they just thought.

Those who have the understanding that the highest authority capable of changing and influencing human life is *al-dahr* referred to by Hamka as "Dahri Community". Indeed Hamka did not mention that that was the understanding of the highest authority of the Arabian Peninsula before Islam came. Even Hamka equates Dahri with Materialists and Naturalists and both consider God does not exist.¹⁹ Hamka's understanding above is different from Dmitri V. Frolov's "Dahri" does not assume that God does not exist, but that their concept of divinity does not lead to a personal God, like Islam.²⁰ Therefore, according to Dmitri V. Frolov, that's where the difference in the concept of divinity in Islam with the concept of divinity which when Islam came was commonly understood by the people of the Arabian Peninsula.

Islam and Social Problem

As *rahmatan li al-`alamîn*, Islamic mission is noble because it upholds the values of social justice (*social justice*), universal brotherhood (*universal brotherhood*), and equality (*equality*). Hamka is one of those who has a vision to restore the noble mission of Islam. Despite this, Hamka is inseparable from the social, economic and political conditions that surround it. But in a certain measure, Hamka managed to maintain the values of the Islamic mission so as not to be out of date.

Besides needing to understand why religious issues in Indonesia are often considered to be independent of issues of public welfare, justice, equality, and social inequality, and economic inequality, there needs to be a model of thought that is distinctive in the Qur'an and also unique in Indonesia that can offers the illusion that

¹⁹ Hamka, *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, Jilid 9 (Singapura: Pustakan Nasional, PTE LTD, 2003), 6618-6619.

²⁰ Dmitri V. Frolov, "Freedom and Predestination", dalam Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an*, Vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill 2001), 267.

the reality shows that the rise of religious ritual life in Indonesia can run in balance with moral development and social life. The life of socialization should be upheld by every individual Muslim. In order for life to be peaceful, peace is dear to each other and the disappearance of deviations.²¹ Hamka, with Al-Azhar's Interpretation is a good model for this.

The direction of thought that is wishing to change society towards a better direction is the direction of thought that engulfs all the disciplines of knowledge or is a criticism for all science. Sociology and anthropology which initially only considered sufficient as a tool to understand society and humans, began also needing to have a direction in order to change society and people for the better. Moreover, basically humans are basically restless creatures, from their anxiety so many questions arise. Philologically, humans are the same kind of ordinary animal who is weak, has no self-defense, and does not have special organic equipment such as trunk in elephants or venomous tails on scorpions.²²

Knowledge that was originally only for science began to get the urge to not just for their own knowledge. Indeed, science becomes a tendency or has a tendency outside itself. Islamic scientific discipline also experienced the same thing, theology, *fiqh*, and Sufism. Questions like: What are the benefits of Islamic theology for life? If people understand theology, what changes their lives for the better? If humans carry out the ritual well, is it beneficial for their lives? What part of life would be better if Muslims established prayers, performed fasts, performed *zakat* and performed Hajj rituals? Indeed, theology is the main target because the basis of religion is theology, so by moving theology to move everything.

Asghar Ali Engineer analyzed that there are fundamental differences in the Islamic struggle after the Prophet Muhammad died before his death. During the time of the Prophet Muhammad, there was absolutely no personal interest in meddling in the struggle for Islamic ideals. The only concern of the Prophet Muhammad is human liberation and humanitarian equality. After the Prophet Muhammad (SAS) died, there was a struggle for power for personal and group interests. The presence of Islam in Mecca from the first time was not merely a theological revolution because in terms of theology, Islam was not a stranger to the people of Makkah. Adherents of Christianity and Judaism in Mecca are certainly no strangers to theological teachings brought by the Prophet Muhammad. Even the name Allah is not a name that is unfamiliar to the entire Makkah community. the familiarity of the

One of the verses that proves concept of divinity brought by Islam is QS. [31]: 25:

²¹ Saihu, "Pendidikan Sosial Yang Terkandung Dalam Surat AT-Taubah Ayat 71-72," *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 09, no. 01 (2020): 146, <https://doi.org/10.30868/ei.v9i01.703>.

²² Saihu, "Rintisan Peradaban Profetik Umat Manusia Melalui Peristiwa Turunnya Adam AS Ke-Dunia," *Mumtaz* 3, no. 1 (2019): 268–79, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.36671/mumtaz.v3i2.44>.

وَلَئِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ ۗ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ ۗ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

And indeed if you ask them: Who created the heavens and the earth? "Of course they will answer: "Allah." Say: "Praise be to Allah." But most of them do not know.

According to Hamka, this verse is a kind of encouragement and a sign of a bright spot in the preaching of the Prophet Muhammad SAW because the people who were preached were not people who did not know about what was intended by the Prophet Muhammad and that was a form of its own convenience for the propagation of Islam.²³ The knowledge of the infidels Makkah about God can be the knowledge that they got from their ancestors because it became public knowledge and was known by any one and could also be a sign that anyone on earth would surely acknowledge in their simplest sense that the creator of nature The kingdom is a power far above the universe itself and they named it God.

The Scriptures for the Occupied

Hamka who underwent colonialism must have a good understanding of how Muslim countries were occupied by foreign nations and understood how the effects of the occupation were on the political, social, and economic conditions of countries with Muslim populations, especially Indonesia. That experience must have left an imprint on Hamka's heart and a question must have arisen: How to revive Muslims who have fallen? Al-Azhar's interpretation gives a fair amount of description of how to revive the fallen Muslims, but the modern nature adopted by Hamka makes it more often to criticize the Muslims themselves rather than launching criticism to those outside the Muslims. For this reason, the transformation of Islam is very suitable for Hamka's thinking.

Al-Azhar interpretation indeed it does not clearly define how transformative Islam is, but the way Hamka writes his interpretation is the typical way of transformation. To make a transformation, the community must first understand the transformation messages to be conveyed. For this, Hamka did very well through Al-Azhar's Interpretation because this interpretation was written in a very interesting and very down to earth manner because it included examples and parables that were very unique to Indonesia. In this way, Hamka seemed to be trying to make the Koran feel like it had just come down to Indonesian Muslims and spoke directly to them in their own language so that Muslims were involved psychologically, emotionally and conditionally with the messages of the Qur'an. and itself. By linking between the texts of the Koran with social realities, Hamka is like trying to reconstruct the cause of the descent of the Koran when these verses were revealed to Muslims in the time of the Prophet Muhammad. By giving an explanation that is

²³ Hamka, *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, Jilid 7, hal. 5579-5580.

very familiar with the reality of daily Indonesian Muslim life, Hamka tried to repeat how the Qur'an was revealed during the time of the Prophet Muhammad.

A New Direction of Transformative Islam

Notion of Transformative Islam is a response to the situation of modernity. Modernization which is seen as able to create a better life, actually gives birth to happiness. Occupation of the level of life occurred, coupled with an atmosphere of global capitalism that is increasingly touching all layers of people's lives. The third world has even identified the Islamic world as part of it. In this context, religion is needed to provide solutions to the problems of humanity and humanity. It is at this point that transformative Islam has relevance. Transformation requires that Muslims create a just and egalitarian socio-moral order, in order to eliminate the abuses of the world, *fasad fi al-ardl*, through consideration of sociological aspects and social sciences. Requires commitment as a *zoon politicon* to those who are oppressed, to jointly seek liberation.²⁴ Transformative Islam is a dialogical quest, that is religion must read and provide answers to social inequality. The critical theological concept is offered as an approach to understanding the relationship of religion to power, modernization and justice for the people. Religion is basically not the identity of a group of people. Religion was revealed as guidance to free humanity from all forms of servitude that go against basic human values.

Transformative Islam is the transformation of consciousness. The transformation of consciousness in question is the awareness to change society from its present condition towards a state closer to the ideal order. Therefore, in the word transformation here, there is an empowering of the people to organize themselves in improving their lives and dignity as human beings

CONCLUSION

Hamka's transformative Islamic ideas in *Al-Azhar's interpretation* are: Hamka supports Islam's alignment with social, economic, and social conditions politics and consider it as important as the Godhead in Islam. What is meant by Hamka's alignment with the social, economic, and political conditions of society is the teachings of Islam that are not only about God, but also about humanity such as the protection of orphans, the poor, and slaves. Human side that is getting opposition from the infidels of Mecca because they will shake their wealth and power.

²⁴ Budhy Munawar Rahman, *Islam Pluralis: Wacana Kesetaraan Kaum Beriman* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2001), 331.

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