

# AL-ALBAB

## CONTENTS

Music in The Liturgy of The Catholic Community in Jakarta, Indonesia  
*Adison Adrianus Sihombing*

Muhammadiyah's Criticism Towards Government Policies in The Era of  
Din Syamsudin's Leadership  
*Tohari, Sjafri Sairin, Muhammad Azhar, M. Nurul Yamin*

Why Indonesia Prefers A Mono-Religious Education Model? A Durkhemian  
Perspective  
*Mohamad Yusuf*

The Borneo Islamic Heritage and The Significance of Idahan Jawi Manuscript  
*Suraya Sintang, Rosdiana Onga, Siti Aidah Hj Lukin, Asmady Idris*

Hamka, Social Criticism and The Practices of Polygamy in Minangkabau  
*Saifuddin Herlambang*

Social Capital and Civic Engagement in Times of Tension: An Evidence from  
Interethnic Relation Developed in Stella Maris Credit Union Pontianak,  
West Kalimantan  
*Alanuari, Mohammad Iqbal Ahnaf*

The Myth of Religious "Radicalism"  
*Amanah Nurish*

The Style of Sufistic Interpretation: A Philological Study and Content Analysis of the  
Manuscripts by Three Popular Ulemas in West Kalimantan  
*Syarif*



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## CONTENTS

1. Music in The Liturgy of The Catholic Community in Jakarta, Indonesia  
Adison Adrianus Sihombing ..... 3
2. Muhammadiyah's Criticism Towards Government Policies in The Era of Din Syamsudin's Leadership  
Tohari, Sjafrin Sairin, Muhammad Azhar, M. Nurul Yamin ..... 19
3. Why Indonesia Prefers A Mono-Religious Education Model? A Durkhemian Perspective  
Mohamad Yusuf ..... 37
4. The Borneo Islamic Heritage and The Significance of Idahan Jawi Manuscript  
Suraya Sintang, Rosdiana Onga, Siti Aidah Hj Lukin, Asmady Idris ..... 55
5. Hamka, Social Criticism and The Practices of Polygamy in Minangkabau  
Saifuddin Herlambang ..... 69
6. Social Capital and Civic Engagement in Times of Tension: An Evidence from Interethnic Relation Developed in Stella Maris Credit Union Pontianak, West Kalimantan  
Alanuari, Mohammad Iqbal Ahnaf ..... 87
7. The Myth of Religious "Radicalism"  
Amanah Nurish ..... 107
8. The Style of Sufistic Interpretation: A Philological Study and Content Analysis of the Manuscripts by Three Popular Ulemas in West Kalimantan Syarif ..... 123

## HAMKA, SOCIAL CRITICISM AND THE PRACTICES OF POLYGAMY IN MINANGKABAU

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### ABSTRACT

*The character and style of a text describes and reflects the cultural structure and nature of the author's mind. This work attempts to describe social criticism and the interpretation of Hamka—the eminent Indonesian exegete—in the Al-Azhar (a fairly recent encyclopedic Quran commentary) of the verses which are legitimized as the verses of polygamy. This study finds that Hamka's interpretation of "polygamy verses" is influenced by the social dynamics of his birthplace, Minangkabau. Hamka criticized religious and adat leaders for the polygamy tradition in Minangkabau. Paradigmatically, Hamka contributed a unique tradition in the dynamics of the interpretation of the Quran in Indonesia where interpretation becomes a social critic. This study reaffirmed the statements that the contestation in interpreting texts is a reflection of social and political contestation and not merely theoretical contestation and that each product of text interpretation expresses empirically the socio-political conditions of the interpreters. This work offered the idea that the interpretation of the Quran with a social approach is to voice criticism of the application of the text to be an alternative to continue in contextualizing the Quranic messages.*

**Keywords:** Hamka, Al-Azhar, Social Criticism, Polygamy, Minangkabau.

### INTRODUCTION

This study discusses Hamka's interpretation and social criticism of polygamy verses of the Qur'an and practices in Minangkabau. The work is supported by the data that was collected through searching of library materials as data sources. The data sources used in this study are literatures that are directly related to the area of the research, namely the book *Tafsir Al-Azhar* by Hamka and other books that talk about verses claimed to justify the practice of polygamy. This research is also accompanied by the use of explanatory analysis that serves to provide a more profound explanation rather than merely a description of a text. This content analysis provides understanding, among others, about why and how the facts emerge and the reasons for what lies behind them (Soekanto, 1986: Qudsy at.al., 2017). So, in this study, explanatory analysis is used to view

thoughts that influence Hamka's interpretation of the verses claimed to justify the practice of polygamy. There are a number of previous studies which agree with this research. Nur Azizah (2015) in Hamka's Thoughts on Polygamy in Al-Azhar's Interpretation, for example, concludes that Hamka's position tends toward monogamous marriage when interpreting the Verse of al-Nisa: 129. The approach taken by Azizah is descriptive-normative without trying to elaborate on the socio-cultural background of the people of Minangkabau that influenced Hamka's interpretation. Sudrajat (2016), in "*Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani, Buya Hamka and Quraish Shihab: Legal Views on Polygamy and Its Background*," put forward two of his assumptions on the basis of psychological and social approaches, but has yet to touch the psychological and social aspects that focus on the Minangkabau community where Hamka originated. In other words, Sudrajat describes the psychological and social approach on a very general level.

Ranuwijaya (1998) in *The Hadiths of Hamka's Tafsir Al-Azhar: Analysis of the Sanad* (chain of narrators) of Hadiths on Verses Regarding the Law of Marriage inventoried the verses regarding the law of marriage. He also collected Hadiths contained within the verses, referred them to the main book, and then ensured the *sanad* of the hadiths quoted by examining their quality. Ranuwijaya found the hadith reference used by Hamka in interpreting the marriage law verses in the Al-Azhar interpretation book. In addition to Bukhari and Muslim, he also used the Hadiths from Abu Dawud, al-Tirmidzi, al-Nasa'i, al-Darimi, al-Dailami, Ibn al-Mundhir, al-Daruquthni, and al-Thabrani. Ranuwijaya concluded, especially considering the Hadiths about justice to wives, the quality of the *sanad* deems them valid. The validity of this Hadith is included in seven categories of valid Hadith. Three Hadiths are used in the *hasan* category and 1 Hadith in the *da'if* category. Although Hamka wrote *Tafsir Al-Azhar* which contained marital issues, there has not been a researcher who has specifically examined his interpretation of the verses that are believed to be the legitimacy of the practice of polygamy and his criticism of the practice of polygamy in Minangkabau. This research is thus the first of its kind and fills a unique niche in academia.

Criticism in the Qur'anic discourse has begun since the time of Prophet Muhammad, although it is still in abstract (*embryonic*) form. In the next stage, along with the rise of sectarian interpretation, the discourse of interpretation criticism strengthened and found its form. There was also strengthening of the paradigm of interpretation absolutism which assumes the interpretation of a person or group is the most correct (Ridwan, 2017). Due to humans' natural need to change, criticism is inevitable (Amin, 2019). Critical thinking always

emphasizes reflective judgment and criticism. Therefore, critical thinking to read and understand reality in a broad and diverse perspective should be directed toward reform and reformulation of the products of thought. Thus, critical thinking is a way to seek understanding of the reality, events, and statements behind meaning (Sirri, 2014; Irfan Hamka, 2017). Among the interpreters who were considered to be critics of the social conditions of his time were Abduh, Sayyid Qutb, al-Zahabi, and al-Farmawi (Mahfudz, 2013).

According to Hanafi (1989), there are five stages that must be followed by a *mufassir* (interpreter) in interpreting the Qur'an. First, let the revelation stand as is, neither negated nor confirmed. Second, interpret the revelation as other works, such as history, literature, philosophy, etc. Methodologically, the Qur'an cannot have a special position because it is interpreted according to the same rules. Third, understand the relativity of a truth. Thus, there is no absolute interpretation. There are only differences in approach to the text due to differences in motivation and interests. Fourth, understand that there is no single interpretation. The *nass* interpreted by a *mufassir* is only an instrument of interest, even human ambition. It is interpreters who then contextually color it. Fifth, understanding that the struggle in interpreting the *nass* is a reflection of the socio-political struggle and not a theoretical struggle. Each product of *nass* interpretation expresses empirically the socio-political condition of the interpreter. According to Saenong (2002), the Hanafi model in interpreting texts is the implication of the reduction theory in Husserl's phenomenology which states: to look for the essential nature of reality is to let the phenomenon speak alone without any presupposition (*presuppositionlessness*). According to Husserl, to capture the nature of objects, at least three reductions are needed. *First*, getting rid of subjectivity; *second*, placing the object as the main object and source while getting rid of all knowledge about the object investigated and obtained from other sources; *third*, getting rid of the whole reduction of knowledge by ignoring everything that is already considered correct by others. Symptoms can manifest themselves if these reductions are accomplished (Muslih, 2008; Hamersma, 1983: 117; Syarif, 2019).

With regard to the theme of interpretation and social criticism, Engineer as quoted by Nuryatno (2007), has provided space for modern interpreters to interpret verses because the Quran itself has normative and contextual sides. There are three approaches to understanding verses about the position of women including verses on polygamy. *First*, the Quran has two components, normativeness and contextualism. The Quran's normativeness is a fundamental principle and values, such as equality and justice that is eternal and can be applied in a variety of social contexts. On the other hand,

contextual revelations are in line with the verses that are in accordance with social-historical problems. *Second*, the interpretation of the Quran verses depends on one's personal perception, his world view, and the socio-cultural background in which he lives. Therefore, a pure interpretation of the scriptures is impossible because it will always be influenced by social-logic circumstances. *Third*, the verses of the Quran vary from time to time. The interpretation of contemporary scholars can be radically different from that of classical scholars. This is because the verses of the Quran always use symbolic-metaphoric language. On one hand, they look ambiguous. On the other hand, this ambiguity offers flexibility and creative change. These three approaches can be used in understanding the interpretation of verses related to women in Islam, and of course, verses on polygamy.

### SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF HAMKA

Hamka is an abbreviation of Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah. This lengthy name contains the names of his father and grandfather. His father's name was Muhammad Rasul Abdul Karim Amrullah and his grandfather was named Muhammad Amrullah. His parents named him Abdul Malik. The name was chosen because Hamka's father highly respected one of his teachers, Sjech Ahmad Chatib, while studying Islam in Mecca. Therefore, he named his child after his teacher's son, Abdul Malik. Later on, Hamka deliberately combined the names of the two men who he respected highly and hoped to emulate. In addition to being known as Hamka, he also had other pseudonyms: A.S. Hamid, Indra Maha, and Abu Zaki (Hamka, 1979: pp. 3, 57, 58, 66). Hamka was born into a family of scholars in Minangkabau. His grandfather was Tuanku Pariaman, a Minangkabau cleric widely known as Abdulmalik ibn Abdulkarim ibn Muhammad Amrullah ibn Tuanku Abdullah Saleh. Abdullah Saleh is also known as Sheikh Guguk Katur. He was a student of Abdullah Arif, an ulema from Pauh Pariaman who allegedly came from the Middle East at the beginning of the 13th century AD, a teacher of Sheikh Burhanuddin.

In 1928 Hamka visited the Land of Deli after returning from Mecca for his pilgrimage in 1927. He lived there for more than seven months. The name of Hamka was first introduced and popularized through the weekly magazine, *Pedoman Masyarakat* (Community Guidelines) in 1934, when he and M. Yunan Nasution (d. 1996) led the magazine. That year, many Sumatran pilgrims left for Hajj. This was also the year with a significantly rising price of latex on the island and also the year with the highest number of pilgrims compared to the previous years. Hamka, then 18 years of age, was a young pilgrim who was "stranded" in the Land of Deli. When returning from Mecca, he did not

return directly to his hometown in Maninjau nor settle in his father's house in Padang Panjang since it was ravaged by the 1926 earthquake that struck the region. This period was his initial phase in the Deli Land. Having received an education in Thawalib Padang Panjang and Thawalib Parabek-Bukittingi and gained experience in organizations, he then returned to study religion, sociology and logic in Java from a number of national figures in Yogyakarta, Surabaya, and Pekalongan. These important figures were people such as H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto (d. 1934), Haji Fachruddin (d. 1929), R.M. Soeryopranoto (d. 1959), Ki Bagus Hadikusumo (d. 1954), and Buya H.A.R. Sutan Mansur (d. 1985), as well as the performing of the fifth pillar of Islam in the Holy Land, Hamka's destiny finally took him to the Deli Land despite spending the last period of his life in Jakarta and died there.

Hamka received a request from the Delegation of Deli Plantation Workers to become a Religious Teacher at Pekan Bajalinggai, a small marketplace near Tebing Tinggi where small traders were domiciled. Although he received a stipend and room and board from this job, he continued with his passion of writing. Before becoming the author of a famous romance book, he wrote a Minang novel titled *Si Sabariah* (1926), which he wrote in Arabic-script Malay. The novel was published in Bukittinggi and Padang Panjang. This novel has yet to be read by many people, as Hamka was not widely known before he set foot in Medan. In his book, *Memories of Life volume I* (1974: 153), he said that his purpose of coming to Medan was to enter the world of literature. He met with the editor of *Pelita Andalas*, a Dutchman named J. Koning at Ninewemaarkt 16-18 (now *Perniagaan Kesawan Street*, Medan). He later said that he had come to Medan because this city had opened his eyes, inspired him and his pen which never dried. While busy with this activity, his uncle Buya H. AR. Sutan Mansur, who had been the Chairman of PB Muhammadiyah (1956-1959), picked him up to return to his native hometown in Maninjau. In his village, on the 5th of April 1929, Hamka married Siti Raham (d. 1971). But before returning home and getting married, he published a series 1928 in Medan entitled *Di Bawah Lindungan Ka'bah* (Under the Protection of the Ka'ba). Another series that was published a year after that (1929) was *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck* (The Sinking of the Van der Wijck Ship).

In addition to his earlier works, Hamka also produces a very well-known book of tafsir: *Tafsir Al-Azhar*. It is unique because it displays multi-dimensional features such as literature, history, politics, language and *dakwah*. The development of Indonesian interpretation from the beginning of the 20th century through the 1960s provides three interpretive features, namely: *First*, Interpretation of certain verses; *Second*, interpretation of certain juz; *Third*,

overall interpretation of the Quran. Examples of the first style include *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim Yaasin* by Adnan Lubis published in Medan in 1951. This interpretation only interprets one *surah*, namely *Yasin*. An example of the second style is *Al-Burhan, Tafsir Juz 'Amma* by H. Abdul Karim Amrullah, published in Padang in 1922. While Hamka's *Tafsir Al-Azhar* became one of the third interpretation models, namely a complete 30 *juz* (parts). This interpretation was first published in Jakarta in 1967 (Gusmian, 2003: 67). *Tafsir Al-Azhar* contains social problems, therefore, this interpretation is categorized as *tafsir ijtima'* (Muradi, 2007).

### HAMKA AND SOCIAL CRITICISM

The teachings of the young people have progressed quite significantly and phenomenally among the people. The deadlock of discursive moments between these youth and elders encouraged the elders to make a correspondence with the scholars of the holy land of Mecca about the religious trends of the Muslim community in Minangkabau. Finally, from Mecca, a circular, known as the *Mecca Fatwa*, was published containing 17 social-religious issues. Hamka thought that the elders' disagreement with the youth was not purely religious, but rather tinged with economic motives. This point later becomes the basis of social criticism of Hamka to the dynamics of social life in Minangkabau and Nusatara in a broader field.

Table 1  
Contestation between the elders and the youth in Minangkabau

No	Practice	Actors
1	Cindur-butua	<i>Penghulu</i> (Muslim wedding officiants) and public figures
2	Kenduri	<i>Penghulu</i>
3	Fidyah salat	Ulemas

In dealing with social practices in his surrounding, Hamka produced *Si Sabariah* in 1928. This work differs from Hamka's previous writings on marital matters. This first work took a story idea from his hometown of Maninjau. The language Minangkabau is used in this work. The work illustrates a deep sympathy for those who are weak, poor, or persecuted, as the story revolves around an impoverished husband and wife. The difficult situation pushed Pulai, Sabariah's husband, to commit suicide by hanging himself. He was not strong enough to live a poor life. The story in this novel illustrates that readers should care about their surrounding environment. In addition to

taking story ideas from his hometown, Hamka also often poured experience from places he had visited into his literary works. The experience of the *Hajj* (pilgrimage) gave him inspiration. As a religious pilgrim, he felt that humans are all equal when they go to meet Allah. Therefore, he wrote a novel entitled *Under the Protection of the Ka'aba*. Among the issues raised in this novel are the classification in Minangkabau society based on wealth, rank, and descent which makes the two human children unable to get married. Hamid and Zainab could not be united in love because of the vast status gap between the two. Zainab's family is higher in status than Hamid's, both in terms of wealth and descent.

Those two works is one of the ways he criticized the Minangkabau custom which often distinguishes people based on wealth, rank, and descent. According to Hamka, the custom is contrary to the Islamic values which put the position of humans equal before Allah. The difference is the piety and faith of a person to Allah. Even it cannot be judged from the outside, like how a person dresses because it is a more complex human relationship with God. The emphasis of Islamic teachings in the story written by Hamka is an important factor. This has become one of his characteristics in each literary work by writing something that should be in line with Islam.

The earlier point was repeated in Hamka's novel entitled *The Sinking of the Van Der Wijck Ship*. The idea of the story in the novel emerged from his association with the people of Makassar. He heard a lot about unrequited love because of ethnic differences, especially those of the Minangkabau group trying to maintain their ethnic purity. This story discusses the fate of the love of two human beings that ended tragically. Zainudin has Makassar blood from his mother, while Hayati is a native Minangkabau. Therefore, Hayati's family does not allow her to marry an outsider. When she instead married someone else, Zainudin went from his hometown to Surabaya in order to forget her. In the end, Hayati's marriage did not last long and she went to Surabaya to find Zainudin. However, her arrival did not get a positive response from him. Finally, Hayati returned to her hometown aboard the Van Der Wijck ship. Unexpectedly, the ship sank and she lost her life. Zainudin regretted what he had done to Hayati before she died. In this work, Hamka addressed the Minangkabau custom that is contrary to the Islamic religion. He criticized Minangkabau customs which prevent marriages to people outside the Minangkabau area. Most Minangkabau people try to maintain the ethnic purity of their offspring by marrying their children to people of the same ethnicity or village. According to Hamka, in this way they can prevent bad things from happening to their children's marriage. As part of the

Minangkabau community, Hamka wanted a change in the implementation of a good marriage for the Minangkabau community. Therefore, his efforts did not stop by relying on sermons. He also poured ideas on the implementation of absolute Minangkabau custom through his written works. In his works, his authority to write stories was indisputable. It is possible that the characters and themes are fictitious. However, there is one thing that is noticeable in his writings. He was determined to continue preaching under any circumstance. Although it was his own people that he criticized, nothing would stop him.

Similar to previous works, *Merantau Ke Deli* (Setting out for Deli) also criticized the Minangkabau custom of marriage and its diaspora culture. A character named Leman, a native of Minangkabau, set out for Deli to look for a job. There, he married Poniem, a Javanese woman. When they visited Minangkabau, the Leman family wanted to marry him to a native Minangkabau woman. His family thinks that it would be incomplete if Leman does not have a wife from his own village. Eventually, the marriage occurs and Leman abandons Poniem. With this work, Hamka criticizes the judgment about marriage within one ethnic group or region as it, in fact, did not guarantee marriage will be everlasting. In addition, he also describes the cultural view of migration from the perspective of the Minangkabau people. Most Minangkabau people assume that migrants returning to their villages must have a lot of money and high positions. So, being wealthy is a must for anyone who migrates. In fact, wealth is not the only guarantee that life will be happy. Hamka also wanted a change in the Minangkabau community's evaluation of the success of migrants, instead of merely a monetary assessment. A number of literary works produced by Hamka also show he wanted a change in the Minangkabau people regarding their traditions. He did not want the Minangkabau community to believe that traditions are always good to be used without question or reevaluation. In addition, he also wanted the custom to be implemented according to the Minangkabau customary principle and teachings of the Qur'an.

Table 2  
Hamka's criticism of the Minangkabau Custom through written works

No	Works	Criticism
1	<i>Si Sabariah</i>	The indifference of the Minangkabau people toward a husband and wife who live in poverty without the care of local residents when finally Sabariah, the wife, hanged herself as she cannot bear the burden of life

2	<i>Di Bawah Lindungan Ka-bah</i> (Under the Protection of Ka'ba)	Minangkabau custom which classifies people based on wealth, rank, and descent causing two people to be unable to get married.
3	<i>Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck</i> (the Sinking of van de Wijck Ship)	Minangkabau custom that prevents marriages to people from outside the area of Minangkabau
4	<i>Merantau Ke Deli</i> (Setting out for Deli)	Customs that prefers marriage within one's own ethnic group/region
5	<i>Tafsir Al-Azhar</i>	Polygamy in matrilineal system in Minangkabau custom

### HAMKA AND THE PRACTICES OF POLYGAMY IN MINANGKABAU

In Minangkabau, the issue of polygamy was once a hot topic of discussion in the community. The polygamy rate in Minangkabau, West Sumatra, based on data released by reports of a leading newspaper namely Bintang Hindia, was very high. Suryadi Sunuri (as quoted by Arya, 2017) said that polygamy in West Sumatra, compared to a number of regions such as Java, Madura, Tapanuli, Aceh, Bali and Lombok, was the highest. The report stated that the number of polygamists in West Sumatra reached 78 per 1000 people. This figure was the same as that of Lampung but higher than Java and Madura, Aceh, Tapanuli and Bali, and Lombok. According to the report, polygamy in West Sumatra was due to prevailing custom and it was also the case in Lampung. The high rate of polygamy in West Sumatra was due to the *semanda* custom (Poespasari, 2018: 35), where the husband relinquished his customary citizenship to acquire the customary citizenship of his wife upon marriage. The data show that the level of polygamy in Minangkabau was among the highest at the time. It was also reported that the voices that opposed the polygamy tradition in Minangkabau have been around for a long time. Many women voiced their objection to their husband marrying another woman. This trend continued and only after the New Order era, the tradition of polygamy began to fade away (Arya, 2017). According to Keimmy (2018), throughout Indonesia's history, male political leaders, influential figures, and even clergy have adopted the tradition; including the nation's first president, Sukarno, who took more than five wives.

In Indonesian Muslim society, perception of the principles of marriage in Islam is polemic. Hamka, for example, was a scholar who thought that the ideal marriage is monogamy, despite there being many practices of polygamy in his time. He criticized the practice of polygamy because a *sakinah* (peaceful/serene) family is difficult to achieve if the husband is polygamous. As quoted by Rush (2016: 89-90), from Hamka's statement that polygamy in Minangkabau

was not polygamy that originated from Islam but originated from the custom of the Minangkabau people (the polygamy of Minangkabau was customary polygamy, not Islamic). For those who practice polygamy, the normative reason in the surah An-Nisa, verse 3 is always used as a justification for their attitude. Although Hamka rejected polygamy, women in West Sumatra gave their support to polygamy. This was conveyed at the 1930 Aisyah Congress held in Bukittinggi. Various parties debated pros and cons during this event. The purpose of this support was for men not to cheat and to prevent an increase in children born out of wedlock. According to lecturer and researcher from the University of Leiden, the Netherlands, Suryadi Sunuri (as quoted by Arya, 2018), the data was based on a report from the Islamic Defender magazine published in Bandung, West Java in April 1930.

The report reads:

*Congres Aisjiah Fort de Kock. Motie kaoem iboe. (Polygamie) Menoeroet warta Aneta, Congres Aisjiah [itoe] dikoendjoengi oleh koerang lebih 4000 perempoean. Congres menjatakan Anti karena penghapoesan polygamie, takoet nanti kelahiran anak-anak [di] loear pernikahan mendjadi bertambah adanja. Maksoednja: bahwa congres Aisjiah anti kepada gerakan jang menghapoeskan polygamie.*

(Aisha Fort de Kock Congress. Women's motion. (Polygamy) According to warta aneta, the Aisha Congress was attended by around 400 women. The Congress stated its rejection of the abolishment of polygamy, fearing that more children will be born out of wedlock. It means that the Aisha Congress is against any movement that aims to abolish polygamy).

This Congress was part of the Muhammadiyah Grand Congress, also held in Bukittinggi, on March 24-26, 1930, recorded as the first Muhammadiyah Congress outside Java. The interesting point from the report is that women who were members of the Aisha organization (previously spelled: Aisjiah) apparently supported polygamy. "They firmly rejected the anti-polygamy movement which began to become widespread at the time," The reason, according to Suryadi, is that women were worried that the monogamy movement would encourage infidelity among men. In addition, they were also afraid that the number of children born in wedlock would increase. Suryadi explained that this report illustrates that the tug-of-war between the pro and anti-polygamy has always occurred in predominantly Muslim Indonesian society. This disagreement to some extent might reflect the conflict between the two secular and modern camps with the conservative one based on Islam (Arya, 2018).

According to Djafri Datuk Lubuk Sati, a member of the Minangkabau Indigenous Custom Advisory Board, polygamy in Minangkabau had become a tradition and a symbol of honor until the 1970s. Datuk Lubuk mentioned several Minang men who were polygamous: the scholars, customary leaders, the rich, the educated, fighters, and those in high positions. However, polygamy was not entirely their own will. There was also the request of the prospective wife's family (Karni, 2003). Interestingly, unlike polygamy in various world civilizations strongly influenced by property, legacy, and authority factors, it occurs in Minangkabau when men do not have access to the ownership of *Harato Pusako* (property). The motivation for polygamy in Minangkabau is not due to wealth but rather to honor, protection, and offspring. Gatra once held an interview with a member of the Minangkabau Indigenous Custom Advisory Board, Djafri Datuk Lubuk Sati, regarding the phenomenon of polygamy in his community. He said that until the 1970s, polygamy in Minangkabau was a tradition and a symbol of honor because respected and responsible men are considered superior as well as protectors and honor for his wife's family. Sometimes *kawin batambuah* (local term for polygamy) is not due to the will of the man concerned, but rather driven by the wishes of the family, both his own family and the prospective wife's family who are willing to be made "second-third-or fourth."

Table 3  
Attitudes toward Polygamy Verses

No	Public Figure	Attitude	Reason
1	Hamka	Recommended monogamy	<i>Sakinah</i> (peaceful/serene) family is difficult to achieve if the husband is polygamous
2	Aisha	Rejected monogamy	Monogamy encourages infidelity among men. Children could be born out of wedlock
3	Customary Community	Rejected monogamy	Polygamy is requested by family of prospective wife

Hamka's view of monogamous marriage is quite interesting when referring to the background of his parents' marriage life, where his father had nine wives. When he was a child, his father remarried, and divorced his biological mother. In fact, in his earlier time, there had never been a major conflict between

his parents. After his father's marriage to another woman, his mother also remarried another man. Seeing this fact, Hamka was sad and disappointed. When he visited his father, he met his stepmother, and when he visited his mother, he met his stepfather. He criticized his father for this polygamy. Faced with such criticism, as he approached his final years, his father was frank that he was the victim of the custom. In the Minangkabau tradition, the position of *ninik-mamak* (customary leader) and ulemas is most influential. Therefore, many *ninik-mamak* wanted his niece to be a wife of an ulema. If a *mamak* (uncle) has succeeded in marrying his niece to a cleric in his region, the ulema become a member of his family. It was in this structure of society, Haji Rasul, Hamka's father, lived so he had many wives (Hamka, 1979; 1982). Hamka believes that justice is difficult to fulfill as stated in the Quran Surah al-Nisa, verse 129. Hamka interpreted surah al-Nisa verse 129 with the following Hadith (Dawud, 1990: 473).

“Musa ibn Ismail narrated to us (he said): from Ayyub, from Abu Qilabah, from Abdullah ibn Yazid al-Khatami, from Aisha, saying: The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) used to divide his time equally among his wives, then he would say ‘O Allah, this is what I am doing with regard to that which is within my control, so do not hold me accountable for that which is under Your control and is beyond my control.’”

From the mentioned hadith, it is known that justice to wives is an act that is difficult for anyone, as the Prophet himself declared to Allah Almighty in one of his prayers. According to Hamka (2015: 45-56), human difficulties in dealing with wives are in the case of justice of love and sexual tendencies. The Apostle, in his opinion, was the fairest example of the division of time, but in his heart he did not feel right.

The movement, within and outside of Minangkabau, appears to be stubborn in preventing many of these abusive practices, especially initiated by young people. This movement can be likened to the movement of the *paderi* (those who uphold the Islamic teachings). Even though in the former Minangkabau *tambo* (legend), the *paderi* were their enemy, in the young people's perception now the purpose of the movement was to abolish all customs that impeded progress. Among the regions in Indonesian, Minangkabau had the highest rate of polygamy. Based on the census in 1920, Minangkabau had the highest record in Indonesia on polygamy. In the past, a Tuan Laras (head of region) had three to four wives. It was not his own intention alone, but it was the splendor of his wives or relatives that led him to be polygamous.

A man whose sister is married to a head of region would be embarrassed when his brother-in-law did not have many wives, so it was often the case that he would find his brother-in-law an additional wife. Even though she was in pain, the first wife also would take another woman for her husband because seeing other men practicing polygamy, she also wanted to take one for her husband. This “shame” is the biggest taboo for Minangkabau women. To protect her husband’s shame, and to raise her husband’s esteem in public, she would sacrifice her own happiness (Harahap, 1926).

Hamka wanted the people to understand and implement the teachings of Islam, free from non-Islamic external elements, and emphasized to revisit the opinions of classical scholars without having to accept them blindly. He also emphasized the importance of performing *ijtihad* (Yusuf, 2005). A barren wife could be a reason for polygamy. When it becomes known that the wife is barren, the husband can remarry. Hamka stated that the desire to have children of his own blood is the instinct of every man (Yusuf, 2005). Hamka neither allowed nor forbade polygamy. He allowed polygamy with restricted permission. Methodologically, Hamka’s interpretation of polygamous verses is similar to Hassan Hanafi’s interpretation of the Qur’an with social approaches. With this method (*al-manhaj al-ijtima’i fi al-tafsir*), according to Hanafi, as quoted by Saenong (2002), an interpreter not only deduces the meaning of the text, but also can induce the meaning of the reality into the text, and places it in an empirical and rational structure.

In his book of *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, Hamka also indicates the seriousness of the issue of polygamy in Minangkabau. He believes that there is a correlation between polygamy and protection of women’s ownership in Minangkabau. The Minangkabau matriarchy itself has become a strong fortress for women who are vulnerable to socially and economically discriminatory treatment. Although in terms of feelings and psychology, polygamy has an effect that cannot be underestimated. Even if a woman has to give up her husband to another woman, she still gets security and livelihood protection because she gets the supply of needs from the production process carried out by her own “kind”. Despite current tendency for people to avoid polygamy, there is no effect on the integrity of the matriarchal system that the Minangkabau community continues to maintain (Hamka, 2015). To fight against polygamy in Minangkabau in the past as well as at present, it still requires tremendous effort (Gunawan, 2017; Anggun, 2017). Table 4 indicates the shifting point of responsibilities that relate to marital life in Minangkabau. Currently Minangkabau people, especially women, tend to see polygamy as an evil deed. They attach a stigma to every man with more than one wife as someone who

does not respect women and indulges in sexual desires. This perspective seems contextual and not at all strange, but it still raises questions. Why was it that when Islam underwent a revival in Minangkabau, polygamy which is actually permissible in Islam, was opposed by most Minangkabau women? (Chatra, 2005: 74).

Table 4  
Comparison between the past and present domestic life in Minangkabau

No	Then	Now
1	Living expenses were from the wife's wealth	Living expenses are born by both husband and wife
2	The house was built by <i>mamak</i> (uncle)	The house is built by the husband
3	Women had arranged marriage	Women are difficult to get a husband
4	Men were picked up by the family of the prospective wife on the wedding day	Men are embarrassed to be picked up on the wedding day
5	Sons-in-laws live with in-laws	Living away from in-laws
6	Men were paid to take a wife and another wife	Men are no longer paid to take a wife

Source: *Tafsir Al-Azhar*

## CONCLUSION

The discourse of polygamy in the Muslim world and the practices of the polygamy within Muslims have been very interesting to many Muslims and non-Muslims. This work attempts to see how a prominent Muslim scholar, Hamka, from Minangkabau which is well known to follow the matriarchal system, provides critics to the teachings and the practices of polygamy within Minangkabau people in Sumatra of Indonesia. The work concludes that Hamka has been very critical to the practices of polygamy in Minangkabau with three arguments. First, Hamka's interpretation of the marriage verses shows his tendency toward monogamous marriage which according to him is ideal to be practiced. Second, monogamous marriage is ideal, according to Hamka, because of changes in the economic conditions of Muslim families. The fact that the household model today has evolved from a traditional family to a single family leaves the burden to the single head of family if polygamy is still being practiced. Third, the experience of being a child from a polygamous father also influenced Hamka's interpretation in rejecting polygamy. This

work leaves some thoughts that have yet to be discussed. One of the issues that require further research is what really affects his interpretation of polygamy. Is it because of his father's polygamous marriage or his parents' divorce? This leads to a further study recommended to be conducted by subsequent researchers to answer this particular question.

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