

Cultural Integration and Political Consciousness in Qur'anic Exegesis: A Study of the *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* by Binjai's Ulama Tiga Serangkai

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Abstract

This study examines the *Tafsīr Al-Qur'an Al-Karīm* authored by the Binjai's Ulama Tiga Serangkai, Abdul Halim Hasan, Zainal Arifin Abbas, and Abdurrahim Haitami, within the framework of belief systems, cultural integration, and socio-political dynamics in Indonesia. Employing a critical hermeneutic approach and historical discourse analysis, the research investigates how this *tafsīr* not only interprets sacred texts but also functions as a medium for fostering socio-political consciousness among Muslims. The primary data source is the *tafsīr* text itself, supported by secondary literature on Qur'anic exegesis in Indonesia and historical studies of the period in which the work emerged. Findings reveal that the *tafsīr* combines *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* and *tafsīr bi al-ra'y* methodologies, with a strong emphasis on themes such as *jihād*, Islamic leadership, and the unity of the ummah. The work illustrates the adaptability of Islamic teachings within diverse social contexts and reflects a critical stance against colonialism and Western cultural hegemony. It also advocates for ethical Muslim leadership. This *tafsīr* remains pertinent to contemporary Islamic discourse in Indonesia, particularly in areas concerning social justice, political reform, and the interface between *Islam Nusantara* and transnational Islam. By situating text within context, this work exemplifies how *tafsīr* can serve both as spiritual guidance and as a vehicle for social transformation.

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INTRODUCTION

The study of Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr*) in Indonesia reflects the dynamic interplay between Islamic thought, local culture, and socio-political realities. Over the decades, Indonesian *tafsīr* tradition has undergone a significant epistemological shift, from classical, text-centric interpretations toward more contextual and socially engaged readings that respond to contemporary issues (Algifari, 2024). This trajectory is evidenced in works such as Hamka's *Tafsīr Al-Azhar* and official exegesis produced by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, both of which illustrate how *tafsīr* serves as a mirror to Indonesia's evolving religious, cultural, and political landscape (A Y Mursyid, Al-Baihaqi, & Murtafi'ah, 2024). Within this continuum, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* by Binjai's Ulama Tiga Serangkai emerges as a unique exegetical text that integrates normative interpretation with ideological expressions of Islamic struggle, political resistance, and leadership ethics.

Academic scholarship on Indonesian *tafsīr* has increasingly employed modern hermeneutic frameworks, particularly those emphasizing the importance of socio-historical context in interpreting texts (Hidayat, 2023). However, most of this research remains concentrated on theological-philological dimensions or state-sanctioned interpretations, thereby marginalizing more ideological and grassroots-oriented *tafsīr*. Notably absent is a critical examination of how *tafsīr* may function as a site for resistance discourse and political consciousness. This study responds to that gap by analyzing the ideological structure and hermeneutic method employed in *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm*, highlighting how it articulates Islamic values through a politicized and culturally embedded lens.

Despite the growing literature on Indonesian *tafsīr*, much of it tends to foreground textual coherence, grammatical analysis, or *maqāṣid*-based interpretation, while underemphasizing how *mufasssirūn*'s social and political locations shape their readings. As Fikriyati observes, exegetical texts often function as theological elaborations, with limited engagement in the political domain (Acim, 2023). In contrast, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* reflects not merely a hermeneutical exercise, but a discursive intervention into the political and social structures of its time (Fikriyati, Fawaid, & Dewi, 2021). By foregrounding themes such as *jihād*, leadership, and resistance, the *tafsīr* offers insight into the ideological convictions of its authors and the challenges faced by Indonesian Muslims during the post-colonial period.

This study adopts a critical hermeneutic approach to examine how the Ulama Tiga Serangkai of Binjai constructs their interpretations. This method is particularly well-suited for unpacking the layers of meaning that emerge at the intersection of religious texts, historical contexts, and political ideologies. A comparative analysis will also be employed, juxtaposing *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* with other seminal works, such as *Tafsīr Al-Azhar* and the official *tafsīr* issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, to map their respective ideological orientations and exegetical strategies (Kaltsum & Amin, 2024).

Globally, the Qur'an has been interpreted both to legitimate power and to critique hegemonic regimes (Achmad Y Mursyid & Nahdiyati, 2024). Indonesian history is no exception, as several *tafsīr* works, especially those emerging from reformist movements, have reflected nationalist ideals and reformist aspirations. For instance, Hamka's *Tafsīr Al-Azhar* articulates a synthesis of Islamic ethics and Indonesian nationalism (Fadli, 2023), while Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy's *Tafsīr An-Nūr* incorporates local wisdom to ensure cultural resonance (Farkhan, Istadiyantha, Wakit, & Ediyono, 2021). In contrast, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* embeds political themes more explicitly, particularly through its treatment of leadership and resistance, making it a compelling subject for ideological analysis.

Moreover, this *tafsīr* employs vernacular expressions and idioms rooted in local culture, enabling it to convey religious ideals in a manner accessible to a broader audience (Nurrohim, Setiawan, Sweta, & Muthoifn, 2024). Rather than functioning solely as an exegetical text, it also serves as a pedagogical and da'wah tool, integrating Islamic principles with regional cultural idioms. Such acculturation reflects the lived realities of Indonesian Muslims and invites closer attention to the interplay between religious text and cultural context.

Previous studies have addressed academic and official *tafsīr* traditions; however, few have critically engaged with ideologically charged interpretations. Hamka's moderate theological position is well-documented, but the potential for *tafsīr* to shape political consciousness remains under-theorized (Darmawan, 2022). Similarly, the role of local culture has often been discussed within the confines of adaptation rather than resistance. This study seeks to advance the discourse by examining how cultural idioms and political aspirations coalesce in grassroots *tafsīr*.

It is also worth noting that hermeneutics in Indonesian *tafsīr* studies has largely been confined to textual-linguistic analyses, with little exploration of how *tafsīr* texts mediate between theology and power (Syamsir, 2023). In this regard, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* offers a crucial case study for analyzing the Qur'an as a vehicle for social critique and ideological articulation.

While state-sanctioned *tafsīr*, such as that produced by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, often aims to preserve national harmony and religious orthodoxy, localized interpretations like *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* may serve counter-hegemonic purposes. They articulate alternative visions of Islamic society that challenge the dominance of state narratives and elite religious discourse (Achmad Y Mursyid & Nahdiyati, 2024).

Accordingly, this research aims to analyze how the socio-religious background of the Ulama Tiga Serangkai shapes the epistemology and content of their *tafsīr*. It examines how this text incorporates resistance discourse, shapes leadership ideals, and incorporates local culture. The comparative approach will further elucidate the distinctiveness of their interpretive model about other canonical Indonesian *tafsīr* traditions.

The scholarly contribution of this study lies in its application of critical hermeneutics to the field of Indonesian Qur'anic studies. By conceptualizing *tafsīr* not only as a textual product but also as a socio-political artifact, this research demonstrates how exegesis shapes political subjectivity and Islamic consciousness in postcolonial Indonesia. It advances current *tafsīr* studies by linking political theology, hermeneutic theory, and cultural studies within a unified analytical framework.

Finally, this research encompasses a textual and contextual analysis of *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm*, juxtaposed with other significant works, to reveal the intertextual and ideological tensions within Indonesian Islamic discourse. The study hopes to illuminate how localized *tafsīr* can function as instruments of both religious instruction and political engagement, thereby expanding the field of Qur'anic studies toward a more inclusive and critical orientation.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative, interpretive-analytical approach grounded in the frameworks of critical hermeneutics and critical discourse analysis. The research is a form of library-based inquiry, focusing on the *tafsīr* text as the central data source. The main object of study is *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm*, authored by the Ulama Tiga Serangkai of Binjai, Abdul Halim Hasan, Zainal Arifin Abbas, and Abdurrahim Haitami (Mahmut, 2024). The *tafsīr* is analyzed for its exegetical content and ideological layers, particularly in the context of colonial and post-colonial Indonesia. This study is normative in nature, aiming to understand how interpretation functions as a site of religious, cultural, and political meaning-making (Basri, 2023).

The study adopts the critical hermeneutic framework of Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, who views the Qur'an as a historically situated discourse, thereby enabling a contextual reading informed by socio-political realities. Additionally, the study utilizes Norman Fairclough's model of critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine how the *tafsīr's* language reflects and reinforces ideological constructs. These frameworks were chosen because they enable the *tafsīr* to be viewed as both a theological document and a political artifact that articulates Islamic consciousness and resistance.

Data for this study were collected through document analysis and library research conducted in Binjai, Medan, and online repositories. The primary data consists of selected thematic passages from the *tafsīr* that deal with *jihād*, Islamic leadership, and local cultural integration. These passages were chosen purposefully based on their relevance to the research objectives. Supporting data include historical accounts, biographical materials on the exegetes, and comparative *tafsīrs* such as *Tafsīr Al-Misbah* by M. Quraish Shihab and *Tafsīr Al-Ibrīz* by Bisri Mustofa. Where possible, informal interviews were held with local scholars and historians to gain additional interpretive insights. Data collection was carried out through text identification, categorization, and thematic coding. The selected passages were analyzed in three phases. First, a thematic review identified recurring motifs related to Islamic struggle, leadership, and cultural idioms. Second, these passages were contextualized in relation to their historical and political settings. Third, critical discourse analysis was applied to reveal the ideological structures embedded in the *tafsīr* narrative.

The parameters guiding the analysis included the balance between *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* and *tafsīr bi al-ra'y*, the degree of socio-political embeddedness, the methods of cultural adaptation, and the discursive function of language in shaping Muslim political subjectivity. The analysis was interpretive in nature and relied heavily on qualitative textual evaluation. Comparative readings of other Indonesian *tafsīrs* were also conducted to position *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* within the broader spectrum of Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship.

In conclusion, the methods employed in this study aim to uncover the multi-layered dimensions of *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm*, especially its capacity to construct a narrative of religious resistance and socio-political engagement. The synthesis of hermeneutic interpretation and discourse analysis provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how localized *tafsīr* contributes to the ideological and cultural discourse of Islam in Indonesia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historical Context and Significance of the *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm*

The *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm*, authored by Ulama Tiga Serangkai's Binjai, Abdul Halim Hasan, Zainal Arifin Abbas, and Abdurrahim Haitami, was conceived during the socio-political turbulence of early 20th-century Indonesia. First introduced in 1937 in North Sumatra under Dutch colonial rule, the *tafsīr* emerged in response to systemic efforts to marginalize Islamic identity through political, economic, and educational mechanisms that favored Western paradigms (Achmad Y Mursyid & Nahdiyati, 2024). In this context, Islamic scholarship became a vital tool of resistance. The *tafsīr* emerged not only as an exegetical work but also as a strategic medium for da'wah and intellectual defiance against colonial hegemony.

This *tafsīr* serves as both a hermeneutical engagement with the sacred text and a reflection of the socio-political experiences of Indonesian Muslims (Mujahidin, 2021). Employing the *tafsīr tahlīlī* method integrated with the social interpretive approach (*al-adab al-ijtimā'ī*), Binjai's Ulama Tiga Serangkai contextualized the Qur'anic message within the struggles of their community (Fadil & Suparwany, 2022). Their approach emphasized unity and resistance, while asserting Islam's moral superiority as a counter-discourse to colonial ideologies (Maimun, 2021).

In comparison to other contemporary *tafsīr* traditions, such as Hamka's *Tafsīr Al-Azhar*, the Binjai *tafsīr* exhibits a more pronounced ideological stance. While Hamka offered critiques of colonialism through a moderate reformist lens, Binjai's scholars were more direct in challenging Western influence and promoting socio-political awakening (Darmawan, 2022). Similarly, although works like *Tafsīr An-Nūr* by Tengku Muhammad Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy also integrated cultural elements, they largely eschewed overt political critique (Fadli, 2023). Even state-sanctioned *tafsīrs* prioritize religious harmony over ideological engagement (Achmad Y Mursyid & Nahdiyati, 2024). Underscoring the distinctiveness of the Binjai *tafsīr* in aligning religious interpretation with anti-colonial resistance (Qodir, Jubba, Hidayati, Abdullah, & Long, 2020).

Furthermore, the *tafsīr* may serve as a source of inspiration for Muslims confronting contemporary socio-political challenges. Historically, it served as a vehicle for both religious instruction and political education, highlighting Islam's capacity to guide ethical leadership and societal transformation (Achmad Yafik Mursyid, AlBaihaqi, & Murtafi'ah, 2024). In today's era, marked by globalization and secularism, the *tafsīr*'s integrative methodology offers a model for safeguarding religious identity while engaging in critical social analysis (Supena, 2024).

This *tafsīr* goes beyond theological exposition to address the socio-political dynamics of its time. Its social hermeneutic framework suggests avenues for contemporary contextual interpretation, ones that emphasize justice, civic responsibility, and cultural relevance. As such, it contributes not only to the Indonesian *tafsīr* tradition but also to broader discourses on the role of Islam in public life (Latif, 2020).

Ultimately, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* represents an enduring intellectual legacy. The methodological and ideological commitments of Binjai's Ulama Tiga Serangkai continue to resonate as a paradigm for integrating classical Islamic teachings with the pressing challenges of modernity. Their work exemplifies how *tafsīr* can function not merely as scriptural commentary but as a transformative discourse responsive to its historical and cultural milieu.

Epistemology and Interpretation Methodology in *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm*

The *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm*, authored by Ulama Tiga Serangkai's Binjai, Abdul Halim Hasan, Zainal Arifin Abbas, and Abdurrahim Haitami, demonstrates a unique hermeneutical model that synthesizes the *tahlīlī* method with a socio-political lens. The authors interpret the Qur'anic verses sequentially based on the *mushafīc* order, while simultaneously contextualizing the meanings within the socio-political realities of Dutch-colonial Indonesia. This interpretive strategy incorporates linguistic analysis, examination of *asbāb al-nuzūl* (circumstances of revelation), and intertextual linkages among verses, offering both a philological and pragmatic understanding of the sacred text (Supena, 2024).

Central to this *tafsīr* is the integration of *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr*, relying on authoritative transmitted sources such as hadith and companion reports, with *tafsīr bi al-ra'y*, which incorporates personal reasoning, rational inquiry, and socio-political insight. This balance is maintained to ensure that the interpretive process remains grounded in traditional Islamic epistemology while also engaging with the historical exigencies of colonial resistance (Supena, 2024). In doing so, the *tafsīr* upholds the scholarly authority of traditional interpretation while introducing contextual elasticity, allowing Islamic teachings to remain responsive to contemporary societal challenges.

This methodological integration is not without precedent, yet the Binjai scholars present a distinctly localized and ideologically driven application. In contrast to Hamka's *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, which similarly adopts a contextual approach but emphasizes moderation and ethical universality, the Binjai *tafsīr* articulates a more overt critique of Western imperialism, underscoring themes of resistance and political awakening (Mujahidin, 2021). While both works draw from rationalist hermeneutics, the ideological tenor of the Binjai *tafsīr* is more explicit, reflecting a theological response to colonial subjugation and cultural hegemony.

Comparatively, state-sponsored *tafsīr* traditions, such as those promoted by Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs, tend to prioritize social harmony, pluralism, and religious moderation (Fadil & Ramli, 2024). These official commentaries often eschew politically charged content to maintain state-defined notions of religious neutrality and national cohesion (Hamim & Abdillah, 2023). In contrast, the Binjai *tafsīr* exemplifies a form of *grassroots exegesis*, shaped by local socio-political struggle and aimed at fostering Islamic political consciousness. This epistemic divergence illustrates the tensions between institutionalized and indigenous forms of Qur'anic interpretation.

Further distinction arises when the Binjai *tafsīr* is juxtaposed with classical exegetical models such as that of Ibn Kathīr or al-Suyūṭī. The former represents *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* par excellence, privileging transmitted sources and linguistic exactitude, often at the expense of contextual responsiveness (Maimun, 2021). While these classical works provide exegetical continuity and theological rigor, they are limited in their capacity to engage modern social and political realities. The Binjai *tafsīr*, however, recalibrates this balance by leveraging transmitted sources while embedding interpretive meaning within the lived experiences of colonized Muslim communities (Hamim & Abdillah, 2023).

Such an approach is indicative of a broader interpretive paradigm in contemporary Islamic scholarship that seeks to reconcile tradition (*turāth*) with modernity (*mu'āṣara*). The synthesis of *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* and *tafsīr bi al-ra'y* is increasingly viewed not as epistemologically contradictory, but rather as mutually reinforcing (Achmad Y Mursyid & Nahdiyati, 2024). By anchoring interpretive authority in prophetic and companion traditions while allowing for reasoned engagement with current affairs, this integrative approach fosters both authenticity and adaptability in Qur'anic exegesis. Scholars such as al-Ṭabarī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī exemplified this method in earlier centuries, demonstrating that rational exegesis, when properly bounded, can enhance rather than dilute the integrity of Islamic hermeneutics.

Nevertheless, the integration of these methods remains a contested issue. Critics caution against the overreliance on personal opinion (*ra'y*) that may contradict *naqlī* (transmitted) sources. The Binjai scholars navigate this tension by maintaining scriptural fidelity while selectively applying rational interpretation to issues of social justice, political leadership, and communal solidarity. Their contextual readings of verses about *jihād*, leadership, and *ummah* consciousness reflect a deliberate attempt to align Qur'anic instruction with the moral imperatives of anti-colonial resistance (Qodir et al., 2020).

From a methodological standpoint, this interpretive duality reflects not only scholarly strategy but also sociological necessity. The lived experiences of the Ulama Tiga Serangkai, deeply intertwined with colonial repression, Islamic activism, and pesantren pedagogy, inform the ideological texture of their *tafsīr*. This socio-biographical backdrop underscores a fundamental principle in hermeneutics: that interpretation is inextricably linked to the interpreter's horizon of

understanding. Far from being objective commentators, the Binjai scholars function as intellectual activists, shaping *tafsīr* as both an act of worship and resistance.

This approach carries profound implications for contemporary exegesis. In a world grappling with secularization, globalization, and systemic inequality, the Binjai *tafsīr* offers a model of responsive hermeneutics, one that privileges moral clarity, social relevance, and historical awareness. Their methodology demonstrates how *tafsīr* can function not merely as a religious endeavor but as a catalyst for societal transformation. By bridging transmitted tradition and rational engagement, their work affirms that Islamic exegesis can evolve without abandoning its foundational principles.

Ultimately, the *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* emerges as a paradigmatic contribution to Indonesian Islamic scholarship. Its synthesis of *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* and *tafsīr bi al-ra'y* offers an interpretive template that is both principled and practical. This model affirms the Qur'an's enduring capacity to speak into diverse historical contexts, illuminating pathways for modern *mufasssīrīn* to engage pressing ethical, political, and cultural questions without compromising textual integrity. As such, it remains a vital resource for reimagining the role of *tafsīr* in shaping the spiritual and intellectual life of the Muslim ummah today.

Beliefs and Local Culture in the Construction of the Meaning of *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm*

Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm by Binjai's Ulama Tiga Serangkai represents a significant example of localized Qur'anic interpretation that deliberately integrates Islamic teachings with Indonesian cultural values. Rather than presenting religious meanings in isolation, this *tafsīr* embeds its exegesis within the beliefs, linguistic expressions, and social norms of the local East Sumatran community. The authors employ regional idioms, customary references, and culturally familiar proverbs to translate Qur'anic concepts into forms that resonate with the collective experience of their audience (Purwati, Utomo, Trinarsih, & Hidayatulloh, 2023)

An illustrative example is how Islamic ethical teachings align with social customs that have long been upheld in East Sumatran society. Through the incorporation of local folklore and moral wisdom, the *mufasssīr* facilitates a convergence between divine revelation and lived tradition. This hermeneutic strategy not only enhances accessibility but also reinforces the notion that Islam in Indonesia evolves through continuous interaction with indigenous cultures. Such an approach demonstrates that Islamic values need not inherently conflict with local customs, but rather may find expression through them in contextually relevant ways.

In contrast to Arab-centric interpretations, such as *Tafsīr al-Jalālain* and *Tafsīr Ibn Kathir*, which prioritize the socio-historical context of the Arabian Peninsula, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* emphasizes the reinterpretation of Qur'anic messages through the lens of Indonesian socio-cultural realities (Achmad Yafik Mursyid & Nahdiyati, 2024). Classical Arab *tafsīr* often assumes the universal applicability of Arab social norms and linguistic constructs, whereas the Binjai *tafsīr* situates Qur'anic teachings within the framework of local culture and ethics. Methodologically, this represents a departure from *tafsīr bi al-riwāyah* towards a more dynamic, culturally embedded *tafsīr bi al-dirāyah* that prioritizes community experience as an interpretive axis.

Comparable localized hermeneutics can be observed in *Tafsīr al-Ibrīz* by K.H. Bisri Mustofa, who uses the Javanese language and Pegon script to convey religious meanings. Similar to the Binjai *tafsīr*, his work validates that Islamic teachings can be disseminated through culturally proximate mediums without compromising theological integrity (Achmad Y Mursyid & Nahdiyati, 2024). A key divergence lies in the treatment of socio-legal themes. While Arab-centric commentaries tend to universalize Arab jurisprudential norms, the Binjai *tafsīr* accommodates local customs and legal pluralism in its interpretation of Islamic rulings (Supena, 2024).

The interpretive framework of *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* is further shaped by Indonesia's Sufi heritage and *pesantren* educational tradition. Drawing from the classical "*Kitab Kuning*", the authors demonstrate a spiritual and ethical orientation in their exegetical method. This Sufi dimension is especially evident in their treatment of verses on inner purification, patience, and

proximity to the Divine (Hamim & Abdillah, 2023). Building on this spiritual foundation, the *tafsīr* provides further insights for navigating modern challenges, such as globalization and the erosion of local identities.

In an era of rapid cultural homogenization, interpretations rooted in local identity serve as cultural anchors that help preserve the distinctiveness of Indonesian Islam (Supena, 2024). Rather than resisting global currents through isolationism, the *tafsīr* negotiates them through a cultural-linguistic strategy that affirms Islamic values while preserving local heritage. The use of indigenous expressions and references in religious instruction reinforces a sense of ownership and authenticity among local Muslim communities.

Moreover, the inclusion of indigenous values in exegesis enhances social cohesion and interreligious harmony. By drawing parallels between Islamic ethics and widely accepted communal norms, the *tafsīr* demonstrates that religious doctrine can coexist constructively with local tradition (Purwati et al., 2023). This integrative model is particularly useful in multi-ethnic, multi-religious societies like Indonesia, where tension between religious orthodoxy and cultural pluralism often arises (Achmad Yafik Mursyid & Nahdiyati, 2024). The *tafsīr* thus contributes to a discourse of inclusivity and respect that can inform Islamic education, da'wah, and civic engagement.

From an academic perspective, the work reinforces the importance of social hermeneutics in the study of Qur'anic interpretation. Rather than treating scripture as an abstract set of propositions, this *tafsīr* demonstrates how meaning is co-constructed among the text, the interpreter, and the community. The emphasis on audience-centered interpretation aligns with contemporary hermeneutical theories that highlight the dialogical nature of understanding (Hamim & Abdillah, 2023). The *tafsīr*'s deliberate adoption of regional proverbs and moral idioms can be read as a discursive strategy, what Fairclough classifies as "discursive practice", that situates Qur'anic authority within the cultural language of the people, thereby resisting hegemonic standardizations of Islamic knowledge production.

In conclusion, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* demonstrates how Islamic exegesis can adapt to local realities without compromising the religious content. Its deliberate integration of cultural elements, spiritual ethics, and sociopolitical relevance makes it a valuable contribution to the landscape of Indonesian *tafsīr*. This study underscores the epistemological and methodological significance of such localized interpretations, offering insights into how Islam can engage with cultural particularity while maintaining its universal essence.

Central Themes in *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm*: Jihād, Leadership, and Ummah

Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm by Binjai's Ulama Tiga Serangkai displays central themes that reflect the ideological and practical struggle of Muslims in confronting colonialism and moral decay (Nadianti & Anshori, 2023). Three dominant themes emerge: *jihād*, leadership, and ummah consciousness. These themes are not treated in abstraction but grounded in the socio-political realities of Indonesian Muslims, particularly during the Dutch colonial period.

Jihād, in this *tafsīr*, is interpreted not merely as physical warfare but also as moral and spiritual exertion. As noted in the interpretation of *jihād*-related verses, the *mufasssīr* asserts: "*is the struggle of Muslims with life and property in upholding the teachings of Allah, as the Prophet Muhammad and his companions did in the face of the strength of the Quraysh, Romans and Persians*" (Hasan, Abbas, & Haitami, 1958a). This indicates that while spiritual self-improvement is foundational, political *jihād* is emphasized in the context of colonial occupation. The struggle against Dutch imperialism is seen not just as nationalistic but religiously sanctioned.

The concept of leadership in the *tafsīr* is treated with moral gravity. It is not simply a sociological function but a divine trust. The exegetes write: "*that power should be possessed by those who uphold the sharia of Allah and lead the ummah with justice and compassion*" (Hasan, Abbas, & Haitami, 1958b). This emphasis criticizes collaborationist elites and calls for leaders who

embody Islamic virtue and are willing to guide both intellectual and physical resistance against oppression (Yusuf, 2024). Leadership, therefore, becomes a theological and political imperative.

On the theme of the ummah, the *tafsīr* elevates the idea of communal consciousness and solidarity. The commentators underscore that "*So all Muslims must be united in welcoming the guidance of the Qur'an, to avoid the path of wrath*" (Hasan et. al., 1958b). This passage explicitly promotes unity and rejects division within the Muslim ranks, warning against Western cultural infiltration that seeks to weaken Islamic morality. The *tafsīr* thus offers a spiritual response to colonial disintegration: a return to Islamic values as a unifying and redemptive force (Suparman, 2021).

This interpretive approach departs significantly from apolitical or exclusively Sufi readings (Bahardur, 2021). For instance, whereas *Tafsīr Al-Tustari* emphasizes esoteric meanings and individual purification, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* fuses spirituality with social activism. The former leans towards *jihād an-naḥs* (struggle of the soul), while the latter mobilizes Qur'anic verses for collective resistance (Putri, Nasrullah, Jannah, Daud, & Nadhifah, 2024). The same contrast is evident when compared to official state *tafsīrs*, such as those by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which generally aim to maintain civic harmony and avoid themes of political dissent. In contrast, Ulama Tiga Serangkai explicitly interprets verses to awaken a political and ethical consciousness rooted in Islamic struggle.

Methodologically, the *tafsīr* employs a *tahlīlī* (analytic) approach, but distinctively blends exegesis with didactic application. It addresses its audience directly, using vernacular expressions and examples from local customs (Siregar, 2024). For example, themes of *jihād* are related to *perang kemerdekaan*, and the language used mirrors the socio-political rhetoric of Indonesian resistance movements. This blend of scriptural authority and national urgency provides a template for Qur'anic mobilization.

These findings affirm the relevance of *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* in shaping Muslim consciousness, past and present. The concept of *jihād*, especially when framed as both inner discipline and social justice, offers a model for confronting modern challenges such as economic disparity and cultural imperialism. Moreover, its concept of leadership, rooted in trustworthiness and moral clarity, provides guidance for political engagement in contemporary Muslim societies.

In today's digital era, where information is vast yet often fragmented, this *tafsīr* serves as an example of how Islamic teachings can be contextualized without being diluted (Fuad, 2022). Its method, grounded, culturally aware, and politically conscious, remains highly relevant (Suriadi & Mursidin, 2020). As the exegetes declare, "*The struggle of Muslims is part of upholding the word of Allah, and it is obligatory as long as there is still an oppression of justice*" (Hasan dkk., 1958b). Thus, the themes of *jihād*, leadership, and ummah are not relics of the past but living principles that demand renewed reflection and application (Habibullah, 2024).

From a theoretical perspective, this *tafsīr* exemplifies what Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd characterizes as a critical hermeneutical engagement: a reading that interprets the Qur'an as a historical discourse responding to lived realities. Abu Zayd's emphasis on *ta'wil*, the interpretive act shaped by historical consciousness, is evident in how the mufasssir derive contemporary relevance from divine revelation. The *tafsīr*'s call for resistance and reform aligns with Abu Zayd's view that meaning is produced through the interplay between text, reader, and context (Zayd, 2004).

Furthermore, applying Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this *tafsīr* can be seen as a discursive intervention. It utilizes language to challenge hegemonic structures (Fairclough, 2013). Key terms such as "*Suppression*," "*Justice*," and "*The Struggle of the People*" are ideologically charged and function to construct resistance as an Islamic duty. Rather than passively reflecting socio-political realities, the *tafsīr* actively shapes Muslim consciousness and promotes collective agency.

In sum, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* is more than exegetical literature; it is a sociopolitical manifesto rooted in Qur'anic ethics. Its integration of scriptural fidelity, contextual awareness, and critical resistance renders it a model for engaged *tafsīr*. As a legacy of resistance and a tool for

contemporary reflection, this *tafsīr* underscores the enduring relevance of Islamic hermeneutics in shaping a just and conscious Muslim society.

Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm as Social Discourse: Implications in Contemporary Islam

Tafsīr Al-Qur'an Al-Karīm by Binjai's Ulama Tiga Serangkai continues to hold significant relevance within contemporary Islamic discourse in Indonesia. Although written during the colonial period, the commentary engages values that remain crucial today, such as social justice, ethical leadership, and resistance to cultural hegemony. It promotes core Islamic political values such as *syurā* (consultation), freedom, and the unity of the ummah, thereby offering conceptual foundations for modern debates about building an Islamic social order (Wright, 2023).

A notable feature of this *tafsīr* is its critical stance toward Western culture, which it characterizes as harmful to the moral structure of Muslim societies. This critique remains relevant in contemporary Indonesia, where many Islamic movements emphasize cultural authenticity in the face of globalization (Rahmatullah, Hudriansyah, & Mursalim, 2021). However, the *tafsīr*'s critical tone also necessitates a balanced engagement: Muslims must not only critique foreign influences but also engage in rigorous internal reform. Thus, its relevance today lies in its capacity to inspire both cultural resilience and ethical introspection.

This interpretation has also influenced the development of Islamic political consciousness in Indonesia. By emphasizing the imperative of just governance and the need for ummatic participation in public affairs, the *tafsīr* has inspired movements oriented toward political renewal and social activism (Sakhi, Amin, & Kurniati, 2024). The rejection of oppression and the demand for justice found in this text continue to shape contemporary Islamic political discourse, particularly among groups advocating for the implementation of Islamic ethical principles in governance.

In contrast with more moderate exegetical works such as *Tafsīr Al-Misbah* by M. Quraish Shihab, which focuses on Islam as *rahmatan lil 'ālamīn* and prioritizes civic harmony, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* adopts a bolder tone, critiquing systems perceived as unjust. While *Tafsīr Al-Misbah* often seeks reconciliation between Islam and modern democratic frameworks, Ulama Tiga Serangkai present Islam as a complete civilizational alternative that resists ideological dependency on Western liberalism (Fadil & Suparwany, 2022).

Despite these critiques, the *tafsīr* avoids extremism. It maintains a strong connection to local traditions and indigenous wisdom, aligning with the ethos of *Islam Nusantara*. In one of its reflections, the mufasssīr states, "*The struggle of Muslims is part of upholding the word of Allah, and it is obligatory as long as there is still an oppression of justice*" (Hasan dkk., 1958b). Such passages reflect a balance between moral firmness and contextual inclusivity.

The *tafsīr* thus combines elements of *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* and *tafsīr bi al-ra'y*, employing both transmitted reports and rational reflection. This hybrid methodology allows for interpretations that are simultaneously rooted in tradition and responsive to contemporary realities (Ismail, 2024). This versatility makes the *tafsīr* particularly useful for addressing modern challenges such as secularization, neoliberalism, and social fragmentation.

Importantly, the *tafsīr* emphasizes the value of local culture as a vehicle for Islamic meaning. Its resonance with *Islam Nusantara* is evident in the integration of customary language, ethical concepts drawn from local wisdom, and regional expressions of spirituality (Mursyidi, 2024). In doing so, it offers a counterpoint to universalist transnational movements that seek to erase cultural specificity in favor of abstract legalism. Nevertheless, the *tafsīr* does not isolate itself from broader Islamic discourses. Its critique of Western cultural dominance and advocacy for independent Islamic civilization align it with elements of global Islamic reform movements. However, unlike some transnational interpretations that promote exclusivism, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* upholds cultural plurality and ethical moderation (Fadil & Ramli, 2024).

These insights affirm that *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* is not only a religious text but also a hermeneutical intervention in Indonesia's socio-political transformation. It builds bridges between scriptural authority and civic responsibility, between Islamic authenticity and modern demands.

With themes such as justice, leadership, and ummatic solidarity, the *tafsīr* serves as a resource for scholars, da'i, and activists seeking to align contemporary social action with Qur'anic ethics (Abou-Bakr, 2023). From a scholarly standpoint, this *tafsīr* is a valuable contribution to Islamic hermeneutics. It offers a model of contextualized *tafsīr* that is both indigenous and critical, balancing fidelity to tradition with responsiveness to history. Its dual emphasis on resistance and reform reflects the enduring capacity of *tafsīr* to shape political imagination and spiritual practice (Ichwan, Ulama'i, Masuwd, & Abdulghani, 2024).

The interpretive depth of this *tafsīr* is further enriched when analyzed through the lens of critical hermeneutics as developed by Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd. According to this framework, the Qur'an is not a static legal code but a dynamic discourse embedded in socio-historical contexts. In this *tafsīr*, we see how the authors reinterpret the Qur'anic imperatives of justice and leadership in response to colonial domination and moral crisis (Zayd, 2006). Their language, moral, urgent, and politically charged, indicates the presence of *ta'wīl* (deep, evolving meaning) in the face of temporal realities. The emphasis on struggle (*jihād*) and righteous leadership echoes Abu Zayd's view that meaning is produced not just by text, but through the engagement between reader, context, and evolving history (Zayd, 2004).

Simultaneously, this *tafsīr* exemplifies the tools of Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), especially in its use of discourse to reveal power relations. The exegetical language not only interprets the verses but constructs a counter-hegemonic narrative against colonialism and cultural imperialism (Fairclough, 2013). Terms like */penindasan/*, */keadilan/*, and */perjuangan umat/* serve as linguistic markers of ideological positioning. Viewed through CDA, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* is not just interpretive; it is constitutive, it participates in shaping the political consciousness of its readers by naturalizing resistance and moral leadership as Islamic imperatives.

In conclusion, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* is more than a legacy of resistance, it is a living text that informs how Indonesian Muslims envision their society. It demonstrates that Islamic values can be enacted within local contexts without compromising theological universality. As such, it continues to be a vital point of reference for any effort to develop a just, ethical, and culturally rooted Islamic civilization.

CONCLUSION

Tafsīr Al-Qur'an Al-Karim by Binjai's Ulama Tiga Serangkai is a *tafsīr* that not only functions as an interpretation of sacred texts but also as an instrument for forming the social and political consciousness of Muslims in Indonesia. With an approach that combines *tafsīr bi al-ma'tsur* and *tafsīr bi al-ra'yi*, this *tafsīr* provides a contextual understanding of Islamic teachings, especially in the face of the challenges of colonialism and modernization. Central themes such as *jihād*, Islamic leadership, and ummah consciousness are the main foundations of this *tafsīr*, which aims to awaken the spirit of struggle of the ummah in upholding Islamic values during various social and political challenges. This interpretation's relevance in contemporary Islam remains significant, especially in discussions of social justice, leadership with integrity, and the relationship between Islam and local culture. This interpretation is also part of the discourse of Islam Nusantara, which emphasizes the importance of acculturation of Islam with local traditions without sacrificing fundamental religious values. On the other hand, criticism of the dominance of Western culture in this interpretation is still relevant in the dynamics of globalization today. However, it needs to be balanced with introspection into the internal weaknesses of Muslims. Overall, this study shows that *the Tafsīr of the Qur'an Al-Karim* has a strategic role in building Muslims' political and religious awareness, both in the colonial and modern periods. With an approach that connects text and context, this interpretation can serve as a reference for broader studies of interpretation as well as an inspiration for generations of Muslims in understanding and applying Islamic teachings in dynamic social and political life.

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