

ULAMA TIGA SERANGKAI'S *TAFSIR AL-QURANUL KARIM*: Source, Method and Profiles of the Interpreters

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Abstract: *Tafsir Al-Quranul Karim* by *Ulama Tiga Serangkai* has not enticed the attention of scholars of interpretation works because this indigenous text, written in 1937, has been in scarcity from circulation. Existing research contains misleading information concerning the date of birth of the *mufassir*. The analysis of this commentary book regarding the number of verses interpreted, the sources of reference, and the method of interpretation still needs to be clarified. This study endeavours to continue the existing research by clarifying data about the originality of *mufassir* and completing the analysis of their commentaries by conducting interviews, documentation, observations and *mufassir*'s grave sites, as well as literature study of the manuscripts. The study found that the *mufassir* in their interpretation using twenty-two books of interpretation, three *mu'jams* and several Islamic references written by both Muslims and orientalist and even the Bible. While the method of interpretation uses *manhaj tahlili*, the interpretation style is social (*al-adab al-ijtimâ'i*).

Keywords: Tafsir Al-Quranul Karim, Abdul Halim Hasan, Ulama Tiga Serangkai, Qur'anic exegeses, Indonesia archipelago.

Introduction

Historically, Islam has existed in the archipelago for a long time, although experts have different perspectives on the exact period. Concerning this issue, at least three opinions exist; according to the first argument Islam in the archipelago was brought from Gujarat in the thirteenth century (Gujarat theory), and the second judgement argues that Islam was imported directly from Mecca in the Seventeenth Century (Mecca theory). In contrast, the third opinion considers Persians were in charge of introducing Islam in the archipelago (Persian theory).¹ However, experts reached a compromise on the first Islamic kingdoms to stand in the archipelago of Pasai and Peureulak on the Northern tip of Sumatra.² Various shreds of proof of Islamic heritage in the archipelago have been discovered, both in the form of architectural buildings, tombstones, writings, and other works portraying the existence of Islam. Some of the written evidence of Islamic teachings found in the archipelago are works of Qur'anic interpretation now termed as the interpretation of the archipelago. The earliest work of the archipelago interpretation is the commentary of sura *al-Kahf*, originating from Aceh, written in the 17th century. Feener notes that the manuscript of this commentary is now available in the archives of the manuscript collection at the University of Cambridge.³ Followed by the commentary work *Tarjumân al-Mustafîd* by Abdurrauf Al-Sinkily, which was also written around the 17th century.⁴ After that, during the 18th and 19th centuries, not many works of exegesis were found in the archipelago, this scarcity is suspected of the cause of colonialism, only in the 20th century did the interpretation of Indonesian scholars reappear.⁵

Among the works of archipelago interpretation in the early 20th century were *Tafsir Al-Quranul Karim*, written by Ulama Tiga Serangkai; Abdul Halim Hasan (1901-1969 AD), Zainal

Arifin Abbas (1912-1979 AD), and Abdurrahim Haitami (1910-1948 AD). The three of them had a teacher-student relationship at the Jam'iyatul Khairiyah Madrasa in the Binjai City Grand Mosque neighbourhood; later, under the leadership of Abdul Halim Hasan, the madrasa changed its name to Madrasa al-Arabiya.⁶

Federspiel in *the Popular Indonesian Literature of the Qur'an* classifies this interpretation of Al-Quranul Karim by Ulama Tiga Serangkai as one of the third-generation works of interpretation in the archipelago, in addition to the interpretations of Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy and Hamka, circulating in Indonesia during the 20th century.⁷ He considered this work of interpretation to contain the spirit of revolution because the *mufassirs* lived and wrote this work both during the Dutch colonial rule and right after the independence of the Republic of Indonesia.⁸

Nadzrah Ahmad in *Abdul Halim Hasan and His Methodological Approach in Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim* examines one of Hasan's commentary works, from the background of the writing to the methodology of the interpretation using qualitative methods and literature studies. He concludes that Abdul Halim Hasan uses special rules (*kaidah*) in interpreting verses by referring to previous commentary works.⁹

Abdul Qadir Umar al-Hamidy in *Examining the Tafsir Methodology Syekh H. Abdul Halim Hasan, H. Zainal Arifin Abbas and Abdurrahim Haitami* also reviewed the methodology adopted by Abdul Halim Hasan in his interpretation. In his conclusion, Al-Hamidy explained that this work of exegesis is the essence of the leading commentary books in Arabic. In translating the verse, the *mufassir* employs the method agreed upon by the commentators. In interpreting the verse, the *mufassir* combines the methods of *bi al-ma'tsur* and *al-ra'yi*. In addressing the *mutasyâbihât* verses, the *mufassir* explained the verse by

quoting the opinions of the *salaf* and *khalaf* scholars. In the matter of *fiqh* verses, apart from quoting previous interpretations, it also refers to the opinions of various schools of *fiqh*.¹⁰

Nadzrah Ahmad *et al.* in *Issues of Islamic Preaching in Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim* examine the theme of *da'wah* in the interpretation of Abdul Halim Hasan particularly, aiming at tracing Abdul Halim Hasan's thoughts about *da'wah*. Nadzrah found Abdul Halim Hasan, in his interpretation, emphasized the discussion of *da'wah* within the *fiqh* framework, and his interpretation of it is merely for the sake of spreading Islamic values (*syiar*) in Sumatra.¹¹

Zaini Dahlan in Syekh Abdul Halim Hasan, *1901-1969: The Roots of Intellectual Traditions in East Sumatra in the Early 20th Century* describes the life history and role of Abdul Halim Hasan during his lifetime on the political and intellectual scene in East Sumatra. According to him, Abdul Halim Hasan succeeded in building an academic culture by establishing madrasas and also dedicated himself to politics by representing the people's voice in parliament.¹²

Nadzrah Ahmad *et al.* also, in the analysis on *The Issues of Faith in Tafsir Al-Quran Al-Karim* discusses explicitly the issues of faith and creed contained in the interpretation of the Ulama Tiga Serangkai.¹³ Jamil and Ja'far wrote an article on *Women and Non-Muslim Leadership from the Perspective of the Tiga Serangkai Ulama*, using their interpretation book of *Tafsir Al-Quranul Karim* in interpreting Qur'an Surah Ali Imran: 28 and Al-Maidah: 51, Jamil concludes that the *Tiga Serangkai* Ulama prohibits non-Muslim leadership in all walks of life.¹⁴

Previous research stated that Abdul Halim Hasan was born on May 15, 1901. However, the researcher suspects that this information remains open to question. Therefore, this article will reconfirm the data regarding the *mufassir* biographies and

further analyse the profiles, sources, and methods of interpretation in his commentary works. Previous studies have also yet to explain clearly how many suras and verses *the Ulama Tiga Serangkai* interpret the Al-Qur'an and what are the sources of reference, methods, and patterns of interpretation.

Methodology

To answer the problems in this research, the researcher conducted library research and content analysis on the *Tafsir Ulama Tiga Serangkai* as primary sources and other relevant written references as secondary references. The approach used is *bahts al-kutub* (discussing the book of interpretation), the same approach used by Faizah Ali Syibromalisi and Jauhar Azizy in discussing the Classical-Modern *Tafsir* Book. In addition, to obtain data on *mufassir*, besides referring to existing written sources, the researcher also conducted observations and documentation at the Library of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) in Binjai City, the residence and one of the *mufassirs* grave sites, as well as performed interviews with relatives and local residents.

Results and Discussion

Biography of the *Ulama Tiga Serangkai* from Binjai North Sumatra

1. Abdul Halim Hasan

Information regarding Abdul Halim Hasan's birth year is confusing because Nadzrah herself stated that Abdul Halim Hasan's birth date was May 15, 1901.¹⁵ Dahlan also confirmed this by suggesting the same date.¹⁶ However, researchers found on the tombstone of the deceased at the Limau Sundai cemetery that the date of his birth was stated as Sunday, April 14, 1901.

Abdul Halim Hasan was born in Limau Sundai West of

Binjai. His father, Hasan, was a religious farmer from Mandailing with the surname Daulay.¹⁷ Hasan is the eldest of six siblings and has two wives. According to Nadzrah, his first wife was Rahmah Lubis, and the other was Sarifah Batubara. However, based on his relatives' information, his second wife, whose surname is Lubis, was not Rahmah but Mardiyah Lubis (Saodah, personal interview, June 20 2022). This fact was affirmed by establishing the Integrated Islamic Madrasah Mardiyah Lubis next to his graveyard. Abdul Halim Hasan died at 68, on November 15, 1969, at the Bangkatan Binjai Hospital and was buried in the Limau Sundi Village Public Cemetery, West Binjai District, Binjai City.

Abdul Halim Hasan is a prominent cleric who dedicated his life only to Islam's development in North Sumatra, especially in Binjai and Langkat. In 1908, for the first time, he received formal education at the People's School (*Sekolah Rakyat*). In addition, Hasan also studied religious knowledge traditionally from several well-known scholars in East Sumatra, including Syekh Hasan Ma'shum. He is the mufti of the Deli Sultanate who was also a direct student of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Al-Minangkabawi while studying in Mecca.¹⁸ Hasan also studied with Haji Abdullah Umar (*qadhi* Binjai), Sheikh H. Muhammad Samah (a Sufi *murshid*), KH. Abdul Karim Tamim (*mufti* of Langkat), H.M. Nur Ismail (*qadhi* of Binjai) and Fakih Saidi Haris (Binjai Muslim Scholar).¹⁹ During the Hajj season in 1926, he had the opportunity to directly study the *talaqqi* method with Sheikh Mukhtar Al-Tharid (the Mecca scholar who lived in Bogor, West Java) for one consecutive year.²⁰

The footsteps of Abdul Halim Hasan's contribution started in 1920 when he became a teacher at Madrasah Jami'atul Khairiyah, Binjai, which at that time was under the leadership of KH. Abdul Karim Tamim, the Mufti of Langkat. Two years later, in

1927, KH. Abdul Karim and the other founding members of the madrasa trusted Abdul Halim Hasan to become the principal of the madrasa to bring more glory. When he became the head of the madrasa, he changed the name of the madrasa to Madrasa Al-'Arabiyah. He also invited several of his students who were experts to become religious teachers, including Zainal Arifin Abbas and Abdurrahim Haitami.²¹ This madrasa transformed into the Al-Ishlahiyah Binjai Islamic College (STAI) in the following period. On April 7, 2011, based on the Decree of the Director of Islamic Higher Education, Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, concerning the Change of Name of STAI Al-Ishlahiyah Binjai, the name Abdul Halim Hasan was assigned to this institution as STAI Sheikh Abdul Halim Hasan Al-Ishlahiyah Binjai.²² In 1935, Abdul Halim Hasan and the residents of Limau Sundai initiated the construction of the Jami Mosque in Limau Sundai, next to the river that connects the village to the market. Since the mosque was founded, he has taught the local community a lot about religion (Zulkarnain, personal interview, May 10 2022).

In 1938, Abdul Halim Hasan was appointed as an advisor to the community organization Jam'iyatul Washliyah until 1943 and in 1943, he also became part of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council in Binjai. Before the early period of independence, from 7 November 1945 to 21 July 1947, Abdul Halim Hasan participated in the development of social organizations by becoming a member of the Ikhwan Al-Safa's leadership. He was appointed chairman of the Hezbollah-Sabilillah-Mujahidin commander for the northwest area of the Medan Area Front in Binjai. Abdul Halim Hasan participated in developing social organizations by becoming a member of the *Ikhwan Al-Safa's* leadership. He was appointed chairman of the *Hezbollah-Sabilillah-Mujahidin* commander for the northwest area of the Medan Area Front in Binjai. After independence, he continued participating in community service

as the initiator in conducting the first MTQ in Binjai, North Sumatra. Finally, he became part of the founders of the Islamic University of North Sumatra (UISU), where he later became a professor.²³ During his lifetime he was very productive in writing several writings, among which are *Tafsir Al-Quranulkarim*, *Tafsir Ahkam*, *Polygamy in Islam*, *Date of Abi Al-Hasan Al-'Asy'ari*, *Lailatul Qadr*, *History of Islamic Literature*, *Date of Islamic Tamaddun*, *The History of the Genesis of Sayara' Writing Arabic*, *History of Fiqh*, *Women and Islam*, and others.²⁴

2. Zainal Arifin Abbas

Zainal Arifin Abbas was born in Lalang Village, Serbanyaman District, Deli Hilir, East Sumatra, on 23 Rabiul Awal 1330 H simultaneously with March 12, 1912, and died on September 16 1979.²⁵ His father was Muhammad Abbas, and his mother was Rajiah bint Abdullah Lubis. In 1919, he studied at the Methodist Boy School in Binjai for one year, then moved to the Anglo-Chinese School in Medan. His grandmother, Lebai Adam, motivated him to study Islamic sciences in two places; in the morning at Madrasah Al-'Arabiyah (Arabic School), led by KH. Abdul Karim and, after that, Abdul Halim Hasan, whereas in the afternoon till evening at the Bandar Snembah Binjai Madrasa mosque led by Abdul Wahab bin Musa. After four consecutive years of studying at Madrasah Al-'Arabiyah, he was allowed to become a teaching assistant at the Madrasa based on a letter issued by the Binjai Syar'iyah Court on June 16, 1927, while continuing to study in class VII.

According to his son's testimony, he had completed several scripture studies from several teachers, including the Book of *Bidâyah al-Mujtahid* and *Al-Asybah wa Al-Nazhâir*, the book of *Syabban Al-Mulâwij* by KH. Abdul Karim mufti Langkat, *Tafsir Al-Jawâhir* and *Itmâm wafâ'* by H. Muhammad Nur Ismail

Qadhi Langkat Hulu. From 1931 to 1936, he also studied with Syekh Hasan Ma'shum, a great scholar of the Deli Kingdom, by studying several books studies such as *Tafsir Jalâlain*, *Minhâj al-Thâlibin*, *Fath al-Mubîn*, *Syarah Matan Al-Arba'în*, *Kitab Shahîh Al-Bukhâri*, and *Jam'u al-Jawâmi'*. Then as for his work, *Tafsir Al-Quranul Karim*, the result of collaboration with Abdul Halim Hasan and Abdurrahim Haitami, worked on the translation of the book *Tarih Tasyri' Islam M. Chuddlory Bey, Kayfiyat Prayer, Development of Thought Against Religion*, and many more.²⁶

3. Abdurrahim Haitami

Abdurrahim Haitami lived in 1910 at the Binjai Pepper Plantation and died on July 13, 1948, in Langsa, East Aceh. His father was Haitami, an Islamic intellectual active in the level 45 Branch Daily Council (*Dewan Harian Cabang tingkatan 45*).²⁷ He completed his early education at the People's School (*Sekolah Rakyat*) in Binjai in 1917 and then studied traditionally from several teachers, including KH. Abdul Karim (*Langkat cleric*), Faqih Saidi Haris, Sheikh Samah, Haji Abdullah Umar, Sheikh H.M. Nur Ismail and Syekh Hasan Ma'shum (The Imam of the Kingdom of Deli). His religious education was also formally completed at Madrasah Al-'Arabiyah with Zainal Arifin Abbas from 1924 to 1930 until he received the title of *ibtida'iyah*. After completing his studies, Abdurrahim was appointed as a teacher with Zainal Arifin Abbas and became head of Madrasah Al-Arabiya at Kebun Pepper, Binjai.²⁸ Abdurrahim Haitami's works of thought gave tone to articles in *Panji Islam* magazine, *Pedoman Masyarakat* magazine, *Menara* magazine, *Pewarta Deli* daily, and his masterpiece with Abdul Halim Hasan and Zainal Arifin Abbas in the form of tafsir entitled *Tafsir Al-Quranul Karim*.²⁹

Profile of Tafsir Al-Quranul Karim

1. Profile

The Ulama Tiga Serangkai first wrote this tafsir masterpiece during their time at Madrasah Al-'Arabiyah located at Masjid Raya Binjai. It was first printed in 1937 by the Islamijah publishing company in Medan. Then in 1941-1947, it was printed in Malaysia by Maktabah Muhammad Ali bin Muhammad Rawi in Penang in Jawi Arabic script. In 1969 it was reprinted in Malay and Latin letters by Pustaka Antara in Kuala Lumpur.³⁰ Up to the present time, This tafsir can only be found in a few places, including the State Library of Malaysia (PNM), Zaaba Library, University of Malaya, Tun Sri Lanang Library, Universitas Kebangsaan Malaysia, Cornell University USA, Leiden University in the Netherlands, and private collections.³¹ With the help of a colleague in America, the author found this work of interpretation in the library of the University of Hawaii at Manoa-Hamilton Library, room 101.

In the history of the tafsir development in Indonesia in the modern century, Federspiel categorizes tafsir Al-Qurānūl Karim by *the Ulama Tiga Serangkai* from Binjai as a third-generation tafsir work, as old as M. Hasbi Ash-Shidieqy and Buya Hamka *tafsirs*.³² The number of verses that were successfully interpreted only up to QS. Al-An'am verse 36 in the seventh volume of juz seven. Unfortunately, the death of the three mufassirs hampered the completion of the entire interpretation.

2. The system of compilation

The writing arrangement in this tafsir book is done in each volume, arranged based on each *juz* of the Qur'an. For example, volume one of this tafsir is the interpretation of the Qur'anic verse of *juz* one, volume two of the tafsir is *juz* two of

the Qur'an, and so on until the seventh volume. In the early pages, the *mufassir* presents the entire Qur'anic verse of one *juz*, along with its translation. The layout is in the form of a column by dividing the page into two parts, the right side is the Qur'anic verse, and the left is the translation of the verse. In the next section, there is the interpretation of the verse. Then, at the end of each volume, there is a table of contents organized thematically based on the themes in the interpretation. The grouping of verses in the interpretation is on the necessity bases by considering the linkage or interrelationship between the verses (*munâsabah al-âyat*) being studied. However, if the verse is perceived to have no relevance or significance to be discussed at length, then it is discussed in its entirety as a single verse and at considerable length.

3. Sources of Interpretation

The tafsir of the Qur'an by the Ulama Tiga Serangkai draws heavily on the previously existing Arabic books of tafsir and Islamic religious books in general. At the beginning of each *juz* in the tafsir, it is mentioned that the list of references used by the *mufassir* in interpreting the verse as is shown in the following table.³³

Table 1:

List of References Used by Ulama Tiga Serangkai's Tafsir Al-Quranul Karim

No	Judul	Pengarang	Kategori
1	<i>Jâmi` al-Bayân fi Tafsîr al-Qur`ân</i>	Abû Ja'far Muḥammad bin Jarir Al-Thabary	<i>Tafsir</i>
2	<i>Mafâtiḥ al-Ghaib</i>	Fakhruddîn Al-Râzy	<i>Tafsir</i>
3	<i>Al-Kasysyâf</i>	Al-Zamakhsyari	<i>Tafsir</i>

4	<i>Gharâib al-Qur'ân wa Raghâib al-Furqân</i>	Nizâmuddîn Al- <u>H</u> asan Al-Naisâbüry	<i>Tafsir</i>
5	<i>Anwâr al-Tanzîl wa Asrâr al-Ta'wîl</i>	Al-Baidhâwy	<i>Tafsir</i>
6	<i>Lubâb al-Ta'wîl</i>	Al-Khâzin	<i>Tafsir</i>
7	<i>Ma`âlim al-Tanzîl</i>	Al-Baghâwy	<i>Tafsir</i>
8	<i>Al-Irsyâd al-'Aqli al-Salîm</i>	Abû Al-Su'ûd Muḥammad Al-Ammâry	<i>Tafsir</i>
9	<i>Al-Futuḥât Ilâhiyah</i>	Syeikh Sulaiman Jamal	<i>Tafsir</i>
10	<i>Tanwîr al-Miqbâs</i>	Abû Thâhur bin Ya`kub Fairuzabadi	<i>Tafsir</i>
11	<i>Tafsîr al-Qur'ân al-'Azhîm</i>	Ibnu Katsîr	<i>Tafsir</i>
12	<i>Fatḥ al-Qadîr</i>	Al-Syaukâni	<i>Tafsir</i>
13	<i>Tafsîr Jalalayn</i>	Jalâluddîn Al-Suyûthi, Jalâluddîn Al-Mahalli	<i>Tafsir</i>
14	<i>Tafsîr al-Manâr</i>	Syeikh Muḥammad `Abduh, Rasyîd Ridhâ	<i>Tafsir</i>
15	<i>Tafsîr al-Jawâhir</i>	Syeikh Thanthâwy Jauhari	<i>Tafsir</i>
16	<i>Tafsîr al-Marâghi</i>	Mustâfa Al-Marâghi	<i>Tafsir</i>
17	<i>Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân</i>	Al-Râghib Al-Ashfahâny	<i>Tafsir</i>
18	<i>Tafsir Al-Furqon</i>	Hasan Bandung	<i>Tafsir</i>
19	<i>Al-Mushaf al-Qur'ân</i>	Mohd. Farid Wajdi	<i>Tafsir</i>
20	<i>Al-Wajaz fî Tafsîr al-Qur'ân al-'Azîz</i>	Imâm Abû Al- <u>H</u> asan	<i>Tafsir</i>
21	<i>Tafsir Marah Labid</i>	Syeikh Nawawi Banten	<i>Tafsir</i>
22	<i>Fatḥ al-Bâri fî Syarḥ al-Bukhârî</i>	Al- <u>H</u> âfîzh Ibnu Hajar al-'Asqalâny	<i>Hadis</i>
23	<i>Siratun Nabi</i>	Abû Muḥammad `Abdul Mâlik bin Hasyim	History
24	<i>Al-Qamûsh al-Muḥîth</i>	Fairûzâbâdi	Dictionary
25	<i>Târikh al-Umam wa al-Mulûk</i>	Ibn Jarîr Al-Thabarî	History
26	<i>Mu`jam al-Qur'ân</i>	Al-Mahamy Abdurrauf Al-Mishry	Dictionary
27	<i>Mu`jam Gharîb al-Qur'ân</i>	Muḥammad Fuâd `Abdul Baqi	Dictionary
28	<i>Tafâshil Ayât al-Qur'ân</i>	Jule Le Baume	<i>Tafsir</i>
29	And other essential books of Islamic teachings		

Based on this list of references, it can be determined that preparing their *tafsir*, the Ulama of Tiga Serangkai, was undertaken at a designated time by presenting and discerning the various references above and then commenced writing their interpretation. This effort can be noticed in the *tafsir*, which is very detailed in describing the history, explaining the meaning of certain words, and clarifying the debatable issue (*khilafiyah*) among the *fiqh madzhabs* by quoting the list of references above and others. Some of the reading materials of one of the *mufassirs*, Abdul Halim Hasan, were successfully archived in the library of MUI Binjai.

Among the above list of references most often referred to by the Ulama Tiga Serangkai in their interpretations are *Tafsir Al-Manâr* by Muhammad Abduh and Rasyid Ridha and *Tafsîr al-Jawâhir* by Thantawy Jauhari. Muhammad Abduh and Thantawy Jauhari are even given notable titles by the Tiga Serangkai whenever quoting their statements; Muhammad Abduh is referred to as *Al-Ustazul Imam*, while Thantawy Jauhari is called the Muslim philosopher.

Considering the work of the Tiga Serangkai appeared in the early twentieth century, it can be well understood that the influence of *Al-Manar*'s interpretation is instrumental since the call for Islamic revival from Jamaluddin Al-Afghani to Muhammad Abduh, Islamic modernists in Egypt, reached the Muslim worlds, more significantly the archipelago remained under the control of foreign power. Tahir Jalaluddin, the native, pioneered and conveyed the renewal spirit in Egypt by subscribing to *al-'Urwath al-Wutsqa* and *al-Manar* from its initial publication to the archipelago.³⁴

In the introduction of the eighth edition of *tafsir Al Quranul Karim*, Tiga Serangkai stated one of the motivations for writing this *tafsir* was due to the pressure of the Dutch colonials who

banned the entry and circulation of books from Arabia that might contain spirits of Islamic revival.

In addition to the Islamic literature above, Tiga Serangkai also refers to other sources, such as the works of orientalists and the bible. For example, when discussing trinity theology, Tiga Serangkai analyzes at length by referring to articles in the bible, as can be seen in Tiga Serangkai's interpretation of QS. An-Nisâ' verse 171. A total of sixteen pages of the *mufassir* explores the trinity issue by showing the arguments both from the Quran verses themselves and the gospel. He cites the Gospel of Luke, chapter I, verses 41 and 67, and chapter II, verses 25 and 26, to argue that the Holy Spirit (Roh Kudus) is not God. *Mufassir* also argues that the Spirit of Truth (ROH Kebenaran) in the Gospel of John chapter XV verse 26 and the Paracletos in the Gospel of Barnabas is the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. Instead of teaching the trinity, the Gospel of Barnabas, chapter 64, according to *Tiga Serangkai* teaches monotheism.³⁵

The scholars of Tiga Serangkai also studied the works of orientalists and included their statements and opinions in interpreting QS. Ali Imran verse 19, for example, the Ulama Tiga Serangkai read Ignaz Goldziher's work, *Le Dog me la Loi del' Islam* and Babinger, *Religions du Monde* and T.W. Arnold's work: *Encyclopedia* to draw their views on Islam.³⁶

4. Method of Interpretation

This interpretation uses the *manhaj tahlilî* method, best known as systematic interpretation among Western scholars. This method of interpretation explains the Quranic verses in detail, verse by verse, in sequence based on the order of the *Usmani Mushaf*. In addition, the style of interpretation applies the pattern of *al-adab al-ijtimâ'i* (social society). At the same time,

the source of interpretation is *bi al-ra'yi* only by emphasizing *bi al-ma'tsûr* sources and then elaborating with reasoning analyses.

The interpretation of the verse starts with a discussion of *mufradât* (vocabularies) deemed significant. In this case, they use the book *Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân* by Al-Raghib Al-Ashfahâny and *tafsir Al-Kasysyâf* by Al-Zamakhshary and others. For example, when interpreting QS. An-Nisa verse 43, the *mufassir* explains the meaning of the word *sha'idan* by referring to the book *Fiqh al-Lughah* by Ats-Tsa'labi and the book *Al-Misbâh al-Munîr*.

*“Didalam qamus ada tersebut: Shaidan itu ialah tanah atau muka bumi. Dan kata Ats-Tsa'alabij didalam kitabnja Fiqhul Lughah: Sha'idan itu tanah jang ada dimuka bumi. Didalam kitab Al-Mishbahul Munir: Sha'idan itu jang ada dimuka bumi, sama ada tanah atau lainnja.”*³⁷ (“The dictionary mentioned: *Sha'idan* is defined as the ground or surface of the earth, *Ats-Tsa'alabij* says in his book *Fiqhul Lughah: Sha'idan* is the ground that is on the earth. In *Al-Mishbahul Munir: Sha'idan* is anything on the earth's surface, whether it be soil or anything else”).

In translating the verses, the *mufassir* translated and interpreted the verses into Indonesian, following the Indonesian spelling pattern that developed during that particular period. For this reason, the translation and interpretation of verses in the first edition, 1937-1938, was written using *Van Ophuijsen's* Indonesian spelling.

Furthermore, the second to ninth editions printed (1940-1960) used the Republican (Soewandi) spelling that developed in 1947-1972, among the differences between the Van Ophuijsen and Soewandi spellings are that the letter *u* has been used to replace the letter *oe* in the previous spelling; Van Ophuijsen, the Hamzah sound has used the letter *k*, repeated words are

written with the *letter 2*, the prefix *di-* and the preposition *di* are written attached to the word after it.³⁸ While the Arabic-Indonesian transliteration system uses the rules set by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in 1952-1953 during the Indonesian Language Congress in Medan in 1954, the clear example as it is noticeable in the following translation of QS. An-Nisa verse 127.

*“Mereka itu hendak meminta fatwa kepada engkau tentang perempuan2. Katakanlah: Allah memberi fatwa kamu tentang mereka, dan memberi fatwa kamu dengan barang jang dibatjakan atas kamu didalam kitab ini tentang anak-anak perempuan jatim jang tidak kamu berikan kepada mereka hak-hak jang wadjib untuk mereka serta suka pula kamu mengawini mereka, demikian djuga tentang anak-anak jatim jang lemah-lemah; dan bahwa berlaku adillah kamu bagi anak-anak jatim itu; dan apa-apa jg kamu lakukan daripada kebaikan; maka sesungguhnya Allah adalah amat mengetahui dengannya.”*³⁹ (“They ask you Prophet regarding women. Say, “It is Allah Who instructs you regarding them. Instruction has already been revealed in the Book concerning the orphan women you deprive of their due rights² but still wish to marry, also helpless children, as well as standing up for orphans’ rights. And whatever good you do is certainly well known to Allah.”)

In quoting the Prophetic traditions, the scholars of *Tiga serangkai* mention their *mukharrij*. If a particular tradition is deemed flawed or unauthentic, then the weakness is explained by referring to the statements of the hadith scholars. Such as when interpreting QS. An-Nisa verse 43 is as follows,

“Ad-Dâragathnij, Al-Hâkim dan Al-Baihagij telah meriwajatkan dari hadits Ibnu ‘Umar dengan marfu’: Tajammum itu dua kali pukul, satu kali untuk muka dan satu kali untuk dua tangan hingga sampai dua siku. Tetapi menurut kata Al-

*Hafizh Ibnu Hadjar: Hadits ini dha'if, karena ada didapati didalam sanad hadits ini Ali bin Zhabjan. Sebab itu Abu Hatim menjebutkan: Ali ini ditinggalkan sadja; kata Jahja bin Mu'in: Dia seorang pendusta, dia seorang jang dha'if-kata Ad-Dâragathnij.*³⁴⁰ (“Ad-Dâragathnij, al-Hâkim, and al-Baihagij have narrated from the hadeeth of Ibn ‘Umar with a *marfû’*: *Tajammum* is two strikes, one on the face and the other on the two hands up to the elbows. However, according to al-Hafizh Ibn Hadjar: This hadeeth is *dha'if*, because Ali ibn Zhabjan is found in its chain of transmission. Therefore according to Abu Hatim: This ‘Ali has been left out; Jahja ibn Mu’in said: He is a liar, he is a *dha'if*; according to Ad-Dâragathnij”

In interpreting the verse, the author also considered the connection (*munasâbah*) between verses and between chapters. The verses under one theme are combined into a comprehensive discussion and are linked to verses in other relevant locations. At the beginning of each surah, the link with the previous surah is also clarified. Notice the *mufassir*'s explanation when starting the interpretation of QS. Al-Maidah here

*“PERHUBUNGAN SURAT INI DENGAN SURAT AN-NISAA’. Sudah kebiasaan djuga dalam tafsir ini ditempat-tempat jang lalu menerangkan perhubungan sesuatu surat jg baru ditafsirkan dengan surat jang lalu. Karena dalam pemandangan orang-orang jang ahli, bukan sesuatu ajat dengan lainnja sadja jang mempunyai perhubungan jang berarti, tetapi antara satu-satu surat dengan jang lainnja djuga sedemikian itu pula.*³⁴¹ (“The Connection of this with surah An-Nisaa’). “It is also common in this exegesis to explain the relationship of a new surah to a preceding one. Because in the opinion of the experts, it is not just one surah and another that have a significant correspondence, but between one surah and another as well as”.)

Regarding the issue of *muhkam* and *mutasyâbih* verses, the scholars of *Tiga Serangkai* believe that the Qur'anic texts are divided into five types: *nash*, *zhâhir*, *musytarak*, *musykil*, and *mujmal*. The first two are *muhkam*, and the remaining two are *mutasyâbih*. As for *musytarak*, if all of its meanings are intended, it is included in the *muhkam* section. If only some of its meanings are intended, it is included in *mutasyâbih*. The Scholars also categorized the verses concerning the attributes of Allah, *harf al-muqaththa'ah*, as part of the *mutasyâbih* verses.

On the issue of *nâsikh wa mansûkh*, Ulama Tiga Serangkai, in its interpretation, is considered a tafsir scholar who ensures the existence of abrogated verses. According to them, the existing *nâsikh wa mansûkh* in the Qur'an is not a defect but rather provides benefits in legal matters.⁴²

Conclusion

Abdul Halim Hasan, the primary *mufassir* in this tafsir work, was born on April 14, 1901, not May 15, as revealed in previous studies. Abdul Halim Hasan, with his two students, Zainal Arifin Abbas and Abdurrahim Haitami, commenced the writing of tafsir when they were teaching together at Madrasah Al-Arabiyah located in Masjid Raya Binjai. His tafsir masterpiece was initially printed in 1937 by the Islamijah publisher in Medan, and then it was later 1947-1947 published in Malaysia.

The Ulama Tiga Serangkai in Tafsir Al-Quranul Karim successfully interpreted the verses of the Qur'an up to the seventh chapter, right up to QS. Al-An'am verse 36. The interpretation of the entire verse of the Qur'an could not be pursued because the Ulama Tiga Serangkai died before it was finished. In Their interpretation, the Ulama Tiga Serangkai referred to 22 books of tafsir, three *mu'jam*, and several other Islamic works from

both Muslims and orientalist and the bible. While the method of interpretation uses *manhaj taḥlīlī*, the interpretation style is social (*al-adab al-ijtimā'ī*).

In addition, the interpreters who originated from the archipelago also make this tafsir pivotal because it holds local wisdom that cannot be found in the works of tafsir that appear in the Arab region. After this preliminary research, which is confined to introducing the profile of this tafsir masterpiece, further research is potentially conducted to scrutinize the thinking of the Ulama Tiga Serangkai regarding specific themes or issues in its interpretation.

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