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**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AKIDAH-AKHLAK.
A COMPREHENSIVE LITERATURE REVIEW OF HAMKA'S
PENUNTUN JIWA**

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Abstract:

In the analysis of Hamka's literary work, the book *Penuntun Jiwa* is often neglected. Nonetheless, it constitutes a substantial contribution to the broader context of character development. In this article, the researchers try to position this small work within Hamka's literary corpus. A phenomenological approach considered the lifeworld of Hamka. It was discovered that Hamka stressed that a person should learn how to be successful in this world and the hereafter. Many of his major works equip a person with a strong belief and good character. However, the book *Penuntun Jiwa* considers the influences of *syaitan* (Satan). Furthermore, Hamka's relocation to various places led to a transformation of his perspective. He could see the temptations that were a danger for the Muslim believer. Insofar the book *Penuntun Jiwa* could serve as a kind of guidebook due to its unique style, which combined *ahadith* and stories.

Keywords:

Akidah, Character, Hamka, Lifeworld, *Penuntun Jiwa*.

Introduction

In the Malay-speaking world, Hamka (Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah) is renowned for his vast knowledge and his wide range of interests. One of his primary concerns was character development and the education of the Muslim community. In his publications, he warned the Muslims not to follow the footsteps of a material way of life and to try to implement a pious living concept. Otherwise, a non-Islamic surrounding would persevere. During his lifetime he warned in many of his books about the fast-growing materialistic tendencies. Therefore, Hamka stressed the necessity of strengthening the Islamic personality and published many books about that topic.

Many years after the death of Hamka, Rehman and Askari (2010) published an article with the title *How Islamic are Islamic Countries?* The results were unexpected and shocking. No countries with a Muslim majority occupied positions 1-37. The best country with a Muslim majority was Malaysia, in position 38. The question was whether these results could be considered valid. Maybe the measurement had some deficiencies? The authors looked at different fields, like the economy, governance, etc. Perhaps the results are now outdated due to new developments. However, the cultivation of virtuous character and ethics appears to be diminishing throughout the Muslim community (*ummah*). Even within the mosques, there exist problematic circumstances:

When [we are] in the mosque, not only are there missing footwear [i.e. someone has stolen it], but also slander and declaring others to be disbelievers can be heard, and criticism is voiced in a very unsympathetic form. Doesn't all that show that *akhlak* has been lost from us? (Shihab, 2016, p. xiv) [Translation by the researchers]

Muslims in the mosque can observe all of these mentioned tendencies. Consequently, Hamka's works remain significant. His books are still popular to this day. Probably the reason is that he has a modern approach that inspires many people.

There are already plenty of publications about character building and Hamka. So, the reader might ask why there should be another publication about that topic. The researchers look at the topic from a different perspective. Often, many authors concentrate on the terms *akhlak* and *akidah* by focusing on the general concepts. However, in this research, the researchers look at the topic of *akidah-akhlak* from the viewpoint of one famous scholar, Hamka, and in particular the book *Penuntun Jiwa*. This book is frequently overlooked as it is not regarded as one of his principal works. Therefore, this article intends to fill the knowledge gap by analyzing it.

Hamka had various interests throughout his life. In addition to being an accomplished novelist, he was also an authority in the field of Islamic studies. One of his increasing concerns was the rising influence of secularism and the deterioration of moral values. He describes these tendencies as follows:

We make clearer references in our daily lives to how we always encounter thorns and thistles and difficulties that we must overcome. One of the roots of all mental illnesses is the 'sex' (sexual) urge. We are 'suspended by the seduction of women.' Apparently, their movements are all full of attraction, the power of attraction. Especially in today's times, after sexual desire is caused by various seductions that

are no longer limited. (So-called) 'You can see' (revealing) clothes, armpits that are shown, 'miniskirts,' thighs that are shown, and all sorts similar to that. (Hamka, 1999, p. 45) [Translation by the researchers]

Besides the growing licentiousness, other changes indicate a significant deterioration of traditional values. A good example is the growing poverty of old people in the Minangkabau homeland of Hamka (Fanany & Fanany, 2019). The modern lifestyle seems to encourage a more individualistic way of life that leads to a neglect of one's own parents or grandparents. Another problematic development is the growing percentage of drug addicts (Elfisha, 2024). All of these developments show that the work of Hamka is still significant. Many of his books emphasize the importance of preserving the mind (*akal*) and developing the character in a positive manner. Within this framework, the booklet *Penuntun Jiwa* (the soul guide) plays an important role and will be analyzed in this article.

The researchers will initially elucidate the concepts of *akidah* and *akhlak*, examining their significance in Hamka's life. In the analysis, the researchers want to look at the book *Penuntun Jiwa* itself. The style and distinctive characteristics will be examined, while also taking into account the lifeworld, as knowledge is a product of a certain social context. The aim is to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the book *Penuntun Jiwa*.

The Term Akhlak

The understanding of the term *akhlak* is crucial for further explanations. In the famous dictionary of Hughes, the word *akhlak* is related to 'nature, disposition, habits, and manners' (Hughes, 1885, p. 12). This 'definition' is quite vague, as there are also other closely related terms, like *adab* (etiquette).

In the Brill dictionary, *akhlak* is related to ethics.¹ This definition is problematic, too. Mydin et al. (2020) remark that *akhlak* is often referred to moral, etiquette, *budi pekerti* (good character), etc. All these terms are similar but there are slight differences. Morals are often related to manners, and ethics the systematic study of what can be considered good and bad.

M. Quraish Shihab (2016) examines the term *akhlak*, highlighting that it serves as the plural form of *khuluq*. From its original connotation, there exists a multitude of interpretations, such as 'size,' 'exercise,' or 'habit.' The word *makhluk* (creature) refers to the 'size.' However, the term *akhlak* is connected to good behavior and is defined by Muslim scholars as follows:

Akhlak are basic qualities that are hidden within oneself and appear to the surface through will/behavior and are carried out without being forced by one reason or another. (Shihab, 2016, p. 4) [Translation by the researchers]

From this definition, it can be seen that there is a relationship between the inner belief and the *akhlak*. The distinction between good and evil behavior is inherently tied to one's inner convictions and beliefs. For example, a believer might remain patient even in moments of difficulty and accept the situation due to the belief in destiny. As a consequence, a person becomes tranquil and behaves well.

¹ <https://referenceworks.brill.com/display/entries/EIEO/COM-0035.xml?rskey=VoITsG&result=1>

The Term Akidah

The concept of *akidah* is frequently discussed in conjunction with the concept of *akhlak*. In fact, in some Indonesian schools, there is even the school subject, *akidah-akhlak* (for example, Muta'allimah, 2020). The term *akidah*, when examined etymologically, originates from the root word *akdan*, which signifies 'knot, bond, agreement, or solid' (Gholib, 2016). With this literal meaning, some important features become clear. It is related to a bond between the believer and Allah (swt.). According to some scholars, there is an inner bond and an outer bond. However, the inner dimension refers to *akidah*.

The term *akidah* refers to the Islamic creed and also to the belief that will be internalized, like the six pillars of faith: the belief in Allah (swt.), the belief in the messengers of Allah, the belief in the books of Allah, the belief in the angels, the belief in the last judgement, and the belief in predestination, whether it is good or bad. Hamka knew that this topic is crucial. He wrote the book *Pelajaran Agama Islam* (Hamka, 2004), in which he focused on the topic of *akidah*.

A well-known definition was given by Abu Bakr al Jazairi and noted in the book of Amri et al. (2018):

Akidah contains a number of truths that can be generally accepted by humans based on *akal* (reason), *wahyu* (revelation), and *fitrah* (natural inclination). Humans engrave this truth in their hearts and believe in its validity and existence with certainty and reject everything that contradicts that truth. (Amri et al. 2018, p. 2)
[Translation by the researchers]

According to Al-Jaza'iri (2014), the scholars distinguish between belief based on reason (termed *akli*) and belief derived from the sources of the Qur'an and Sunnah (termed *naqli*). A good example may elucidate this point: A believer has faith in Allah (swt.) as mentioned in various verses of the Qur'an, such as in Surah Ali Imran.

Allah 'Himself' is a Witness that there is no god 'worthy of worship' except Him—and so are the angels and people of knowledge. He is the Maintainer of justice. There is no god 'worthy of worship' except Him—the Almighty, All-Wise. (Qur'an 3:18) (quran.com/3)

Such a verse is a textual proof of the existence of Allah (swt.). However, other proofs are based on the intellect. For example, for someone who uses the mind, it is evident that there must be a Creator. Hamka himself refers to the use of intellect and feelings:

So, the center or central of the knowledge of Allah (swt.) is within oneself. It is the feeling of weakness in the face of an unseen power that regulates and governs this world, that I am one of the creatures (made) by the Creator (The One Who Creates) (Hamka 1998, pp. 19-20). [Translation by the researchers]

The internalization of the belief in Allah (swt.) leads to a tranquil mind, recognizing that Allah's intentions are solely for the benefit of the believers (Berkah, 2023). Ultimately, this culminates in good conduct.

Hamka And Akhlak

Hamka, was born on 17 February 1908 in the interior of West Sumatra. His father was the well-known Islamic scholar Dr. Amrullah (also known as Haji Rasul), who was active in the modernist movement. One of his hopes was that his son Abdul Malik (the young Hamka), would follow in his footsteps and take over his school. However, this was not the case. On the contrary, he was a recalcitrant child (Maulana, 2018). There might be many reasons for that. One possible explanation could be that the young Abdul Malik possessed a keen interest not only in Islamic sciences but also in literature. This was not particularly favored by Islamic scholars of that era. Another factor contributing to Hamka's 'problematic' character was his difficult relationship with his father. Haji Rasul ended his marriage with Hamka's mother during Hamka's formative years. This resulted in a strained relationship (Steenbrink, 1994). Hamka frequently exhibited a critical mindset, underscoring the importance of independent thought while maintaining a skeptical perspective on Minangkabau customs (Stark et al., 2022). He himself was a Minangkabau. However, he could see that some of the local cultural elements were 'problematic' and static.

After the independence of Indonesia, he was active in politics (he supported the Islamic reformist party *Masyumi*) and as a journalist. As already mentioned, parts of his thinking were throughout his lifetime dominated by his Minangkabau homeland (Maarif, 2008). His publications, which often thematized Minangkabau topics, reflected this. For example, he wrote about the history of West Sumatra or the gender situation. He faced imprisonment in the early 1960s. The reason was probably the growing influence of the Indonesian Communist Party.

In the field of education, Hamka began as a teacher of religion in the plantations near Medan. In 1957, he assumed the role of lecturer at Universitas Muhammadiyah Padang Panjang and subsequently attained the position of professor at Universitas Mustapo Jakarta (Kamaruzaman & Osman, 2022). In Jakarta, he played a pivotal role in the transformation of the Al-Azhar Mosque into a venue that facilitated both worship and scholarly pursuits for the community. He also became active as a leading figure in the Indonesian body of Islamic scholars (MUI). However, he stepped down due to a controversial verdict on the permissibility of Muslims to join Christmas celebrations. On 24 July 1981, he passed away.

Some events in the life of Hamka can illustrate his character. He was a person who was forgiving and prioritized the principles of Islam above all else.

- When Sukarno passed away, Hamka was willing to be the Imam for the *Solat Jenazah*. Even though he was imprisoned during his reign.
- Hamka faced accusations of plagiarizing his novel *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van der Wijck* in the early 1960s (Rahman, 2017). The well-known author Pramoedya Ananta Toer (1925-2006) played an important role in these accusations. Nonetheless, Hamka was willing to teach his daughter basic Islamic knowledge.

Hamka showed his noble character during a talk. He knew that he could not have been successful without the support of his family. Consequently, he underscored this point when he invited his wife to join him on the stage. Hamka was a person who did not neglect his family and the Islamic community. He was willing to teach and educate the people to build up an Islamic community. Nonetheless, he was aware that there were many problems, and he

described them in his books. The fascinating way of his life inspires many people to this day. If someone studies Hamka's life, then it is possible not only to learn about his private life but also about the Indonesian history of the 20th century (Naim, 2008).

Research Methodology

This study was conducted through a comprehensive examination of existing literature. This entails the exploration of pertinent literature. In the subsequent phase, the researchers commenced a thorough examination of the existing literature and sought an appropriate framework. It was decided to consider the phenomenological concept of Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckmann (Schutz & Luckmann, 1974). Their concept examines the way how an individual perceives the world. In the case of Hamka, it can be analyzed that Hamka changed his personal opinion due to moving to different places; the spatial sphere of his lifeworld changed. What was once perceived as 'normal' underwent a transformation prompted by a new perspective. This research aims to explore the factors that shaped Hamka's thought processes.

Findings

Hamka authored over 100 books during his lifetime (R. Hamka, 2016). Many of his literary works attained prominence and have been subjected to frequent analysis. On the other side, some books, like *Penuntun Jiwa*, are less well-known. Nonetheless, it is an important work that deserves careful consideration.

Hamka And The Development Of The Personality

The development of the personality was crucial for Hamka. He even dedicated a complete book to this topic (Hamka, 2023). Several elements play a role in shaping an individual's development (Figure 1). In Figure 1, the face symbolizes a person, while the thin arrow is the lifespan. Some features have an influence on education and personal development, particularly character, belief, and reason. The brackets show that some of Hamka's books thematize certain topics. However, Hamka stresses that a person must also be a practicing believer. However, there will be some obstacles during the lifetime, particularly the trials by the devil (*syaitan*). The book *Penuntun Jiwa* focuses on this point.

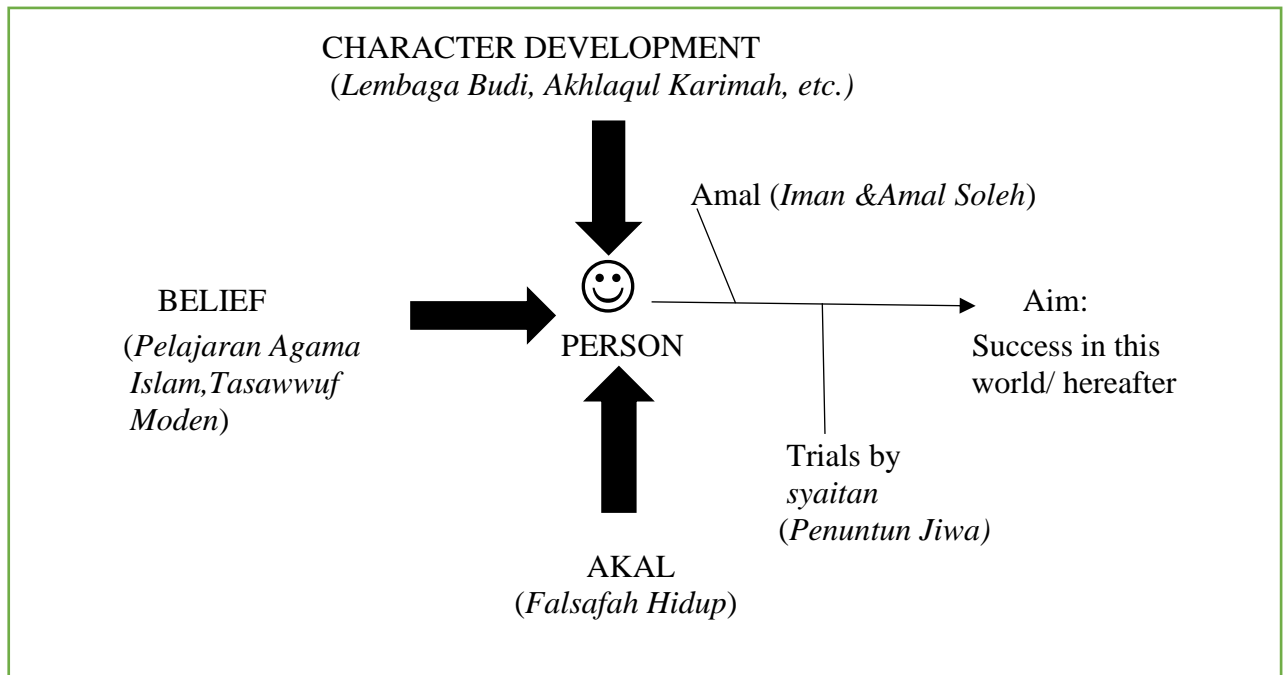


Figure1: Hamka's Works And the Development Of An Individual (In Brackets Hamka's Books)

Figure 1 illustrates the educational values of Hamka. A person has to train his *akal* (reason, intellect). This is not only limited to religious science. Hamka himself was a famous novelist. The students should learn the language and other knowledge. However, *akal* must follow the right way of life. In the book *Falsafah Hidup* (Hamka, 2020), a profound understanding is presented. One must safeguard one's own reasoning and intellect. *Akal* goes beyond the knowledge (*ilmu*) as it comprises the weakness of the own character and similar features. A human can understand the existence of God and behaves according to His rules. One of the significant aspects that Hamka highlights is the importance of modesty and the avoidance of an excessively ambitious lifestyle. Such a particular way of living may pose risks to one's health:

By maintaining simplicity, one's health is preserved. Many people work for the public good, for example, political party leaders, authors, and the like. He fasted (did not sleep) until night. He said he sacrificed for the public good. Suddenly he fell ill (Hamka, 2020a, p. 241) [Translation by the researchers]

Individuals must recognize the importance of safeguarding their health and striving for a life of moderation. In the modern era, parents should cultivate a certain courage, intrinsically linked to the concept of fate. Therefore, other components that are necessary to cope with the trials of life, namely the internalization of good character traits and belief. The book *Pelajaran Agama Islam* (2004) teaches the *akidah*. Nonetheless, mere knowledge might be insufficient.

In Islamic sciences, there is also an inner dimension. A comprehension of these elements can enhance an individual's well-being. The book *Tasawuf Moden* (2018) gives a practical understanding. Hamka mentions some essential features that should be internalized: A good

example is *qana'ah*, which means to be thankful for the situation as it is at the moment. It consists of several elements:

The meaning of *qana'ah* is very broad. It tells us to truly believe in our power, to patiently accept the divine decree if it does not please us, and to be grateful when He lends us, favors while our lives are in the body, and our obligations are not yet over. (Hamka, 2019a, p. 276) [Translation by the researchers]

Another essential element for the development of a human being is the development of the character. Hamka was aware that the local Indonesian traditions can contribute to communal well-being. The people might support each other. However, Hamka could also see the growing danger of a materialistic and secular way of life. Particularly, the colonial powers intend to instill such knowledge in the mind of the people. The consequences are that the graduates of the schools are as described:

We meet Dutch people who are more than Dutch, French people who are more than French, English people who are more than English, but their skin is black [...]. More and more they dare to declare that Islam is old-fashioned [...]. (Hamka, 1999, pp. 10-11) [Translation by the researchers]

Such a development is dangerous. Secular education produces graduates who perceive Islam as antiquated, resulting in a disregard for the Islamic way of life. For a Muslim, it is essential to excel in both this world and the hereafter. Therefore, a person must also try to do good deeds and worship Allah (swt.). Hamka wrote some books that encouraged the readers to perform good deeds. Two well-known books are *Iman & Amal Soleh* (Hamka, 1999) and *Tuntunan Puasa, Tarawih & Shalat Aidilfitri* (Hamka, 2009).

The thin arrow of Figure 1 symbolizes lifetime. Equipped with knowledge, the person performs good deeds and tries to please Allah (swt.) until he reaches a good place in the hereafter (i.e. Paradise). However, there is the devil who wants to distract the people and lead them astray. Hamka thematizes these topics in the book *Penuntun Jiwa* and it can be considered as a kind of 'guide' that helps the people not to go astray.

The Book *Penuntun Jiwa*

The book *Penuntun Jiwa* (in the Malay edition: *Falsafah Syaitan*) was published in the year 1936.² During that time, Hamka resided in Medan. In the 1930s, he had a very creative phase. He published many of his famous fictional and non-fictional books. In many of these books, the way of life was described in his fictional characters. They had to face hardship and cope with the given situation (Stark & Huszka, 2024). Some of the characters failed, due to the traits that were described in *Penuntun Jiwa*. For example, the major character of the novel *Tuan Direktur* is greedy and evil (Hamka, 2019b). The consequences could be disastrous. Therefore, the book *Penuntun Jiwa* is useful. It belongs to an important Islamic topic, namely the way to purify the soul (*Tazkiyatun Nafs*) (Room, 2022).

The book *Penuntun Jiwa* is a kind of side book to his major works about *akhlak*, like *Akhlaqul Karimah* or *Lembaga Budi*. This book distinguishes itself through Hamka's identification of

² https://ms.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bibliografi_Hamka (retrieved 12/01/2025)

nine fundamental points, which, while frequently regarded as trivial, are in fact pervasive. The points seem to exhibit ambiguity, as positive and negative character traits are allocated their distinct chapters, such as *bakhil* (stinginess) and *tawakal* (trust in Allah).

The Content of Penuntun Jiwa

The book *Penuntun Jiwa* consists of nine chapters that describe the trials that can happen throughout the life of an individual. Table 1 presents the content in a systematic manner.

Table 1: The Content of *Penuntun Jiwa*

Chapter	Topic	Major Content
1	<i>Bakhil</i> (Stinginess)	Some people are stingy and become servants of money. They do not donate it. Stinginess is a disease.
2	<i>Surga dan Neraka</i> (Paradise and Hell)	The term paradise is not necessarily connected to the afterlife. Hamka mentions Ibn Taymiyyah who said that a person who cannot find paradise in this world will not find it in the hereafter. The paradise in this world is the tranquility due to belief.
3	<i>Korban Keyakinan</i> (Victim of Conviction)	Some people are prepared to die for their conviction that they are on the true path. This is not solely a matter of religious conviction.
4	<i>Jatuh Pailit</i> (become bankrupt)	It is possible to be wealthy and to be bankrupt. Such a person must know that it is worse to be bankrupt in the afterlife.
5	<i>Tawakal</i> (Trust in Allah)	It is essential for a believer to put his trust in Allah. This does not mean just to sit down and have trust but to make efforts.
6	<i>Perjuangan untuk semua</i> (A struggle for all)	<i>Akal</i> is a part of fortune. It can be shared with others.
7	<i>Filsafat Setan</i> (The Philosophy of Satan)	The Satan has his own strategies. He tries to convince someone in a subtle way to commit sins. Later, according to Satan, the believer can repent. Even anger is, according to Satan, something that is allowed to protect the honor.
8	<i>Memburu Harta</i> (look for Treasure)	In order to become rich, the people forget that there are sins.
9	<i>Dia Lupa</i> (He forgets)	The believer must remember that richness, health, etc., come from Allah.

Table 1: The Content Of *Penuntun Jiwa*

The Malay version of *Penuntun Jiwa* places the philosophy of *syaitan* (Indonesian spelling *setan*) in the center. His reasoning possesses a subtle quality that may not be immediately apparent. Only a believer with a good foundation of *akidah* can recognize that he uses ‘techniques.’ *Syaitan* tries to change the values. For example, he endeavors to make people more focused on this world and they should neglect that there is an afterlife. Interestingly, *Penuntun Jiwa* dedicates many chapters to worldly matters. Hamka knew that these topics

become more and more 'important' in modern society. In the end, such a person can die in a miserable condition. Therefore, the book *Penuntun Jiwa* gives practical examples and serves as a guide (*penuntun*).

The Style of the book Penuntun Jiwa

The stylistic approach of *Penuntun Jiwa* is quite intriguing. Hamka conveys renowned *ahadith* (plural of *hadith*) alongside conventional stories. Two examples might illustrate that. In Chapter 3 (*Dia Lupa*), he tells in his own words a *hadith* that is mentioned in *Sahih Bukhari* (Hadith 3464). However, Hamka does not mention the source. In this narration, there are three persons: one is sick, one is blind, and another is bald. An angel (*malaikat*) comes and fulfills their wishes, and they become healthy and rich. After some years, the angel returns in the disguise of a poor man and asks the men for support. The angel asks whether it was not Allah who helped them, but two individuals assert that their achievements were attained independently of divine support, resulting in their punishment and a return to their former states. It is solely the individual who once experienced blindness who recalls that his favorable circumstances are a result of divine grace. He can keep his richness.

An example of a story that Hamka mentioned is that of Hassan Basri (in the chapter *korban keyakinan*). He was a communist and was executed by hanging in the Indonesian town of Cianjur. Just before his execution, he shouted, "Long live communism." The mix of religious narrations and affairs that concern Indonesia results in a book that is easy to read, and the reader gets knowledge without the didactic attitude of some teachers.

In the book, there are elements that should become part of the believer, like *tawakal*, determination, and the *akidah*, particularly the belief in paradise and hell. The believer must know that *syaitan* is his enemy and encourages him to become stingy or forgetful.

Discussion: Hamka and the Lifeworld

Hamka went through different phases throughout his life. Upon examining the spatial dimensions of the lifeworld, it becomes evident that he resided in various locations for extended durations, notably in West Sumatra, Medan, and Java. When he was young, he studied the traditional customs (*adat*) of the Minangkabau society and he got the title *Datuk Indomo*. In Minangkabau society, the head of a matri-lineage or sublineage usually gets the title *Datuak* (*Datuk*). This shows that he was interested in matters pertaining to Minangkabau customs. One element was the way how to handle conflict. Discussion is an important feature (Tanner, 1969). Another way is to try to let the conflict on a low scale before proceeding to the next level (Benda-Beckmann, 1984). The most important feature is to achieve a kind of consensus (*mufakat*) so that all parties are satisfied.

When Hamka was in the school of his father in Padang Panjang, he could see that a more aggressive way in solving a conflict was sought. His father resigned from his role upon observing that some of his students had adopted communist ideologies and sought to exert influence over the institution. The increasing impact of communist ideology culminated in a significant uprising in the year 1927, which was suppressed by the colonial government (Kahin, 1996). When Hamka visited different places, he could see that it was very different from the traditional Minangkabau way of life. Typically, the young boys had to move to the prayer house (*surau*) after they reached a certain age (Radjab, 1995). He could observe that some of his fellow citizens fell for a secular and non-Islamic way of life. The communists aimed to establish

a form of paradise in this world, criticizing religious authorities for instructing the populace to merely accept their circumstances and concentrate on the afterlife. Hamka could witness the situation of merchants who out-migrated to cities like Medan. Sometimes, they became stingy and started to forget that there is a life after death. The book *Penuntun Jiwa* should open their eyes so that they could see the real situation.

Conclusion

This article outlines the characteristics of the book *Penuntun Jiwa*. This book serves as an essential supplement to the current literature in the domain of *akidah-akhlak*. It uniquely presents the profound manner in which the *syaitan* engages in argumentation. The believer will not realize it easily, as it seems appropriate for him to be stingy in this capitalistic environment or concentrate entirely on worldly matters. The consequences could be severe in the afterlife.

Hamka understood that the circumstances faced by numerous individuals were quite challenging. Therefore, his book was significant, although it is just a small booklet. Subsequent research may delve deeper into the circumstances of the 1930s and this fruitful phase of Hamka's literary work.

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