




## A Comparative Study of the Interpretation Methods Mohammed Arkoun and Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid from a Hermeneutic Perspective

Ana Syelviana<sup>1</sup>, Amilatul Islamiyah<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia

Email : [sylviana257@gmail.com](mailto:sylviana257@gmail.com), [mileanashir@gmail.com](mailto:mileanashir@gmail.com),

 <https://doi.org/10.66931/jmlt.v2.i01.29>

---

### ABSTRACT

**Keywords:**

Interpretation,  
Hermeneutics,  
Mohammed  
Arkoun, Nasr  
Hamid Abu Zaid

\*Corresponding Author  
[sylviana257@gmail.com](mailto:sylviana257@gmail.com)

The debate on the reading of the Qur'an and methods of interpretation represents a dynamic and evolving aspect of academic discourse, particularly within the context of the contemporary intellectual landscape. Two of the most prominent Muslim intellectuals are Mohammed Arkoun and Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid. The two figures in question exhibit similarities in their approach to Qur'anic interpretation, particularly in their reliance on Arabic literary sources. However, they employ disparate methodologies in their respective interpretations of the Qur'an. The objective of this article is to examine the methods proposed by Mohammed Arkoun and Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid and to ascertain how these two figures interpret the contemporary Qur'an. A comparative study revealed that Mohammed Arkoun and Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid adopt a similar approach, namely hermeneutics. However, the hermeneutical approach of each figure differs. Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid adheres to a progressive quasi-objectivist hermeneutical perspective, whereas Mohammed Arkoun espouses a subjectivist hermeneutical stance. In his approach to reading the Qur'an, Arkoun draws upon epistemological principles, whereas Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid employs discourse criticism. Arkoun regards the Qur'an as the language of revelation enshrined in the corpus (the Ottoman Mushaf) as God's parole. In contrast, Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid views the Qur'an as a historical text that must be contextualised in order to gain an accurate understanding of its ideals, which are *shālihun likulli zamān wa makān*.

---

**Article History:**

Submitted: 18-01-2026, Revised :13-03-2026, Accepted: 05-06-2026

**Please cite this article in APA style as:**

Sylviana, A., & Islamiyah, A. (2026). A comparative study of the interpretation methods Mohammed Arkoun and Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid from a hermeneutic perspective. *DAAR EL-KAMIL: Multidisciplinary Journal*, 2(1), 23-34.  
<https://jurnalstebibama.ac.id/index.php/jmlt/>

---

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia The study of the Qur'an and its interpretation is an ongoing process that evolves in accordance with the principle that the Qur'an is *shālihun li kulli zamān wa Makān*. This implies that the text of the Qur'an is always relevant to the existing context, whether in the past, the present, or the future. The Qur'an is a text that allows for multiple interpretations, or *yaḥtamilu wujūḥal*

ma'na, and therefore the plurality of Qur'anic interpretations is a necessity and a natural phenomenon, provided that the interpretations are scientifically and morally justifiable (Kamal, 2019, p. 58). In consequence of the passage of time and the growth of intellectual development, a variety of methodologies and approaches have emerged with the objective of exploring the discourse of the Qur'an. Among the contemporary interpretation methods currently offered are those of Mohammed Arkoun and Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, who employ the Qur'anic hermeneutic approach to find the meaning in the Qur'an, which they refer to as the corpus or cultural product.

Arkoun employs a multi-disciplinary methodology, drawing upon insights from a range of social sciences, including history, politics, psychology, sociology, mythology, philosophy, semantics and linguistics, to examine Islamic religious texts and those that continue to be regarded as authoritative within the Islamic tradition. The intellectual influences on Arkoun's thought include Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Ferdinand de Saussure and Paul Ricoeur (Akbar et al., 2020, pp. 17-18). Michael Foucault is a prominent figure in the field of philosophy, renowned for his contributions to structuralism. Foucault's structuralism posits that the epistemological lenses through which humans perceive and understand the world vary across different historical eras, leading to the emergence of distinct perspectives. Jacques Derrida, a linguist, is known for his contributions to semiotic theory and the concept of deconstruction. Derrida posits that humans are unable to engage in the processes of thinking and writing without first establishing a connection to a preexisting thought in order to gain comprehension of a text. Ferdinand de Saussure and Paul Ricoeur are linguists and thinkers who have made significant contributions to the field of myth studies. Their work on the concept of myth is widely regarded as a crucial element in helping humans comprehend textual meaning.

Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid is a contemporary Islamic thinker who posits that the Qur'an is a cultural artefact. In order to gain an accurate understanding of the Qur'an, it is essential to consider the context in which it was created. Nasr Hamid's progressive quasi-objectivist school posits that historical meaning represents the initial footing of Qur'anic interpretation. Consequently, Islamic thinkers must strive to comprehend the meaning that lies beyond the literal message (Syamsuddin, 2024, p. 58). Nasr Hamid's intellectual heritage encompasses the works of Ferdinand de Saussure, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Thoshihiko Izutsu. Nevertheless, despite their similarities with regard to the concept of revelation, Nasr's position differs from that of Izutsu. Nasr's analysis is more narrowly focused on specific aspects of the Arabic language.

In his work, Arkoun employs deconstruction theory to deconstruct an interpretation or product of al-Qur'an interpretation. The deconstruction approach may be employed as a means of elucidating certain aspects of Islamic tradition that remain obscured or have been obscured and distorted by the influence of other elements. Nevertheless, it differs from Derrida's deconstruction, which is not particularly concerned with the final signifier. He

posits that language is a metaphor devoid of a definitive referent. While Arkoun espouses a particular stance on the last sign, Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, in his reconstruction hermeneutics, criticises the literalism of the Qur'an, which he believes does not adequately address contemporary problems. Consequently, he devised an objective interpretation of the Qur'anic text, based on intellectual insights, with the aim of facilitating future efforts in interpreting religious texts. This approach should be applied to both Qur'anic studies and Sunnah, with a view to making them more humanist, dialogical, transformative, contextual, negotiative, humanistic and deconstructive (Zayd, 2004, pp. 22-37).

From the above explanation, it can be seen that Arkoun and Nasr Hamid have tendencies that diverge from one another, despite their shared epistemology, namely Arabic literature. Accordingly, this article aims to examine the methods proposed by Mohammed Arkoun and Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid. Using a comparative study, this article will provide a comprehensive description of both the similarities and differences between the two interpretative methods developed by the two figures.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a library research design. Library research was chosen because the primary data consisted of written sources related to the hermeneutical thought and Qur'anic interpretation methods of Mohammed Arkoun and Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid. Data were collected from books, journal articles, conference papers, and other scholarly publications discussing their intellectual backgrounds, epistemological foundations, and approaches to interpreting the Qur'an. The collected data were then organized, categorized, and critically reviewed to identify the main concepts and methodological characteristics proposed by each thinker. The analysis was conducted using a comparative method combined with descriptive-analytical techniques. First, the study described the hermeneutical frameworks developed by Mohammed Arkoun and Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, including their intellectual influences, assumptions about revelation, and approaches to Qur'anic interpretation. Second, a systematic comparison was undertaken to identify similarities and differences between the two methods, particularly regarding their understanding of text, context, language, history, and the role of the interpreter. Through this comparative analysis, the study sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of the contributions of both scholars to contemporary Qur'anic hermeneutics and Islamic thought.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

#### **The Biography of Mohammed Arkoun**

Mohammed Arkoun is a contemporary Islamic thinker who was born on 1 February 1928 in Taourirt-Mimoun, Kabilia, Algeria. Kabilia is a Berber-populated mountainous region east of Algiers, Algeria. Berbers are a non-Arabic

('Ajamiyah) speaking people scattered throughout North Africa (Nurmansyah et al., 2023, pp. 1-14). Arkoun's parents were community leaders in the region and still speak his mother tongue, Kabilia. But Arkoun himself has a good command of Arabic, the national language of Algeria, which he learnt at a young age. To express his ideas, however, Arkoun often wrote in French. In addition to his long stay in France, Arkoun also found it difficult to express his thoughts in Arabic. Arkoun's intellectual background begins with his primary education in the city of Algeria and then his secondary education in the city of Oran, Algeria (Budi, 2022, p. 19). Arkoun continued his higher education at the University of Algiers, specialising in Arabic language and literature. From 1954 to 1962, Arkoun continued his intellectual journey in France, where he obtained a Master's degree in the same field at the University of Sarbonne. Arkoun's intellectual journey at the university was quite long until 1969, which led Arkoun to obtain his doctorate. In 1970-1972, Arkoun taught at the University of Lyon and then returned to Paris as a professor of the history of Islamic thought. In addition to his teaching, Arkoun has written many academic works, including *Essais sur la pensée islamique* (Essays on Islamic Thought) in 1973, *Lectures du Coran* (Readings of the Koran) in 1982, and *Pour une Critique de la raison islamique* (For a Critique of Islamic Reason) in 1984 (Meuleman, 2012, pp. 59-60) Mohammed Arkoun was laid to rest in Morocco on 14 September 2010 (Jazulli, 2023).

#### **Biografi Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid**

Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid was born on the 10th of July 1943 in Thantha, Egypt (Latief, 2003, p. 38). He was born into a religious family. He received religious education from his family from an early age. So that he could memorise the Qur'an at a young age, at the age of eight. He was born into a religious family. He received religious education from his family from an early age. He learnt the Qur'an by heart at the age of eight. Academically, he graduated from Thantha Technical School in 1960. He then went on to study at Cairo University (1968-1972). As a student, he showed his intellectual talent as a critical and progressive student in the field of Arabic language and literature. He went on to obtain a master's degree (1977) and a doctorate (1981) in the same university and field of study.

Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid's professional trajectory commenced at the university level, where he was employed as an electronic technician at the National Communication Organisation in Cairo. Upon graduating from his undergraduate degree in 1972, Arkoun commenced his academic career as a teaching assistant for Arabic studies at Cairo University, concurrently pursuing his master's degree. Furthermore, Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid instructed Arabic to non-native speakers at the Diplomatic Centre and the Ministry of Education (1976-1987). On account of his exemplary academic record, he was appointed as an assistant lecturer in Islamic Studies in 1982 and was bestowed with the honorary title of 'Professor' in that field in 1995. However, Nasr initially hesitated to accept the appointment as a professor in the field of Islamic Studies. This was

motivated by the rejection of a dissertation in the same field presented by Muhammad Ahmad Khalafullah 25 years earlier. At that time, Khalafullah submitted a dissertation entitled 'al-Fann al-Qasasi fi al-Qur'an al-Karim'. The dissertation presents a historical study of the Prophet's stories, which, with its deductive approach, posits that the stories in the Qur'an are not mere history, but rather, literary stories. The rejection of his dissertation resulted in the revocation of Khalafullah's teaching rights (Latief, 2003, p. 40). Additionally, Nasr was subjected to vehement criticism, resulting in his being labelled an apostate by certain parties. This was due to his assertion that the Qur'an was a creation and that the version currently in circulation was shaped by socio-historical dynamics at the time of its revelation. Consequently, he rejects the notion of God as the author of the text. However, the study of God is not a scientific field, and Nasr Hamid therefore turns to religious authorities, in this case the Prophet, the Companions and the early generations, to gain insight into God's intention. Nasr Hamid's views are perceived to challenge the authority of the Qur'an as a sacred text. This illustrates that his ideas are highly contentious among those with conservative views. Nasr came to recognise that the level of opposition he faced was such that he was labelled an infidel by an Egyptian court, which resulted in his divorce from his wife. He was aware of the intellectual challenges and tensions faced by his predecessors. Nasr was cognizant of the potential risks, but it was unlikely that he would encounter a similar fate to that of his seniors. After due consideration, the university resolved to appoint Nasr to teach Islamic studies. Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid's oeuvre includes the following works: *Al-Ittijahat al-'Aql fi al-Tafsir. Dirasat fi Qadiyat al-Majaz 'ind al-Mu'tazilah* (Rational Approach in Interpretation: A Study of Majaz according to the Mu'tazilah), *Falsafat al-Ta'wil: Dirasat fi Ta'wil al-Qur'an 'ind Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi* (Philosophical Interpretation: A Study of Ibn 'Arabi's Qur'anic Interpretation), *Mafhum al-Nass: Dirasat fi 'ulūm al-Qur'an* (The Concept of Text: Studies in the Sciences of the Qur'an), *al-Nass al-Sulat al-Haqiqat* (Texts of Authority and Truth), *al-Imam al-Syafi'i wa Ta'sis al-Aidiulujjiyyat a-Wasathiyyat* (Imam Syafi'i and the Formation of Western Ideology). Additionally, he has authored numerous other works, including *Isykaliyat al-Qiraat wa Aliyat al-Ta'wil* (Problems of Reading and Mechanisms of Interpretation), *al-Tafkir fi Zamān al-Takfir* (Reflections on the Concept of Disbelief), and many others (Latief, 2003, pp. 43–46). Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid died after returning from Indonesia due to a rare virus for which there is no medical cure (Syahridawaty, 2020, p. 131).

### **Hermeneutika Dekonstruksi Mohammed Arkoun**

Since the Qur'an's inception, a plethora of tafsir literature has emerged, encompassing a multitude of interpretations. The two cases represent a multitude of interpretations, akin to geological layers on Earth, one atop the other. Consequently, in order to gain an accurate understanding of a verse, it is necessary to penetrate beyond the accumulated interpretations, which represent

a solid geological layer that has limited the view. In order to do so, it is essential to dismantle this layer and gain access to the initial event of formation, which is still fresh and rich. In Arkoun's view, the relationship between Islamic tafsir literature and the various schools of thought demonstrates that the Qur'an is employed as a means of constructing other texts that can address the needs and preferences of a specific historical period during the Qur'an's revelation. The result of the interpretation is an intellectual work and cultural product that is constrained by the cultural context, based on the social environment or theological tradition, which serves to protect it, rather than the context of the Qur'an itself. In order to gain an accurate understanding of the context of the Qur'an, it is essential to dismantle the layers of interpretation that have been distorted and mixed by the various historical and socio-cultural struggles that have taken place over time.

The term 'deconstruction' has its etymological roots in the Latin words 'de' and 'construction'. In the English language, the prefix 'de-' is used to indicate a source or direction of movement. In French, it is used to indicate a place or point of origin. In Latin, the prefix 'dis-' is used to indicate detachment, reversal, or the act of dismantling (Soekarba, 2019, p. 91). The term "construction" encompasses a range of processes, including the creation of new structures, the alteration of existing ones, the interpretation of existing structures, and the formation of new arrangements or forms. From the aforementioned meanings, it can be inferred that deconstruction is an approach that functions to dismantle an interpretation or product of interpretation of the Qur'an. The deconstruction approach may be employed as a means of elucidating certain aspects of Islamic tradition that remain obscured or have been obscured and conflated by other elements. Arkoun is firmly opposed to the inflexible tradition of interpretation. He also attempts to deconstruct the theological meaning of the Qur'an in order to render it more pertinent to the modern context. To this end, he introduces a semiotic approach to reading texts, which is more scientific and in accordance with the times. Nevertheless, his emphasis on this methodology is perceived to disregard the theological elements that are pivotal in Qur'anic exegesis. Arkoun put forth three recommended approaches for interpreting the Qur'an:

1. Historical Approach

Arkoun is one of the figures who emphasises the importance of viewing the Qur'an as a product of Arab history and culture. This approach provides an in-depth understanding of the context in which the verses were revealed and views the Qur'an and Islam as a human phenomenon. This is significant because an interpretation cannot be detached from the historicity of the interpreter and their society when interpreting the Qur'an. History provides the parameters and boundaries of the logical-lexicographical and imaginative interpretations pursued by Muslims thus far. Arkoun provides an illustrative example in surah al-Kahf (9:26), which recounts the story of seven individuals who slept in a cave during the time of the prophets Moses, Khidr, and Dzulqarnain. For Arkoun, these figures are of significant historical importance. To illustrate, the prophets

Moses and Khidr derive from the Mesopotamian tradition, while Dzulqarnain is of Greek provenance.

## 2. Anthropological Approach

The Qur'an is replete with mythical knowledge, which implies that the Qur'an is inextricably linked to the human mind that comprehends and interprets it. It is inevitable that different cultural characters will produce different understandings. Arkoun asserts that myth is not a pre-rational delusion that must be eschewed in interpreting the Qur'an (Soekarba, 2019, p. 143). Myths are fundamental and necessary for the advancement and guidance of humanity towards a meaningful existence. Consequently, Arkoun does not oppose the concept of myth; however, he does challenge the manner in which myths are misinterpreted and distorted.

## 3. Linguistic Approach

The linguistic approach enables the discovery of an underlying order. Arkoun's approach draws inspiration from Ferdinand de Saussure, a French semiotician. Arkoun employs synchronicity and diachronicity within his linguistic system. However, in contrast to the classical Saussurean approach, Arkoun's analyses are more intricate, encompassing the distinction between author, context and reader. This extends beyond the scope of Saussure's system, aligning with the hermeneutic tradition (Latief, 2003, p. 13). The Qur'an contains numerous metaphors, as Arkoun notes in reference to al-Thabari's work. This often employs the phrase 'God said' (yaqūlu Allah), which is a metaphor because al-Thabari did not intend to convey that God spoke in the manner of a human. This approach is used to analyse the ways in which humans produce meaning across diverse cultural contexts.

In regard to the merits of this deconstruction, Arkoun endeavors to reclaim meanings that have been marginalized and overlooked as a result of the numerous processes of closure and freezing in Islamic thought. Although Arkoun's approach is influenced by Derrida, there are notable differences between the two. Derrida posits that deconstruction is distinct from destruction in that it does not obliterate or erase a discourse, but rather elucidates its full spectrum of aspects and elements. Conversely, Arkoun is more explicit in his assertion that deconstruction must be accompanied by reconstruction (or rebuilding) of discourse, with the objective of overcoming the limitations and distortions inherent in previous discourses (Soekarba, 2019, p. 184). As a result, Arkoun's methodology is frequently abstract and somewhat nebulous, as he does not consistently define the terminology and concepts he employs in a precise or consistent manner. An illustrative example is the passage on myth and the various forms of function and dysfunction. Furthermore, Arkoun's analysis is replete with theoretical references, yet he is seemingly unaware of the tensions between these references or between certain elements of his sources and his own stance. This represents a significant shortcoming in his approach.

Hermeneutika Rekonstruksi Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid

Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid is a prominent figure among contemporary Islamic

thinkers. He developed a method of interpretation with a humanist and dialogical character, which subsequently led to the emergence of the concept of 'humanistic hermeneutics' (Zayyadi, 2017, p. 6). Nasr posits that hermeneutics and the concept of ta'wil are essentially synonymous. Moreover, he makes a clear distinction between tafsir and ta'wil. Nasr posits that tafsir is concerned with elucidating the meaning of a text, whereas ta'wil is oriented towards establishing a functional relationship between the meaning of the text and the present circumstances.

Additionally, he employed a structural model of analysis, similar to that of Saussure in his semiotics, to interpret the Qur'an. This model is a family of linguistic branches. However, he posits that the act of interpretation is not confined to the analysis of linguistic texts, but rather encompasses a more expansive range of elements, including events (al-ahdas), reality (al-waq'a'i), and phenomena (al-zawahir) (Latief, 2003, p. 18). This demonstrates that interpretation is not merely concerned with the text itself, but also encompasses the interpreter, the interpretation, and the text. He distinguishes between the text, the author, the period in which it was produced, and the reality that gave rise to it. This study, therefore, marks the death of the author of the text (died of author/maut al-muallif). Nasr also emphasises the historicity of the Qur'anic text, its historical awareness, and a critical attitude towards the text and its historical context. The relationship between the reader and the text dialectically (jadaliyyah) becomes a key issue for interpreters, as it allows them to avoid the ideologisation of the mufassir's interpretation (Assumi, 2017). It is evident that this concept gives rise to a multitude of disparate interpretations, as the endeavour to subsume the Qur'an within a unified interpretative framework is inherently misguided. Furthermore, it seems implausible that the ideologies of the mufassir do not exert some influence on the interpretation process. Whether consciously or unconsciously, the mufassir's ideologies are inevitably embedded in the interpretive process, particularly when interpreting the text of the Qur'an in accordance with their scientific capacities. However, this process of ideologisation must be constrained to prevent it from exerting undue influence on the interpretation of the text, particularly in instances where such influence may lead to an interpretation that is divorced from the text itself.

Abu Zaid makes reference to two distinct approaches to the interpretation of the text, namely 'tendentious reading' and 'bound reading' or 'ideologisation'. Tendentious reading is characterised by subjectivity and the influence of personal bias or opportunistic motives. In contrast, bound reading is typically objective and open, yet constrained by a specific ideological framework. This framework may be rigid and may fail to consider the contextual and dynamic nature of the text. These approaches diverge from the productive and contextual reading methodology proposed by Abu Zaid. This approach aims to contextualise the text within its historical and cultural milieu, thereby avoiding the distortions inherent to an ideological lens.

In his analysis of the Qur'an, Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid identifies two key objectives.

His primary objective is to ascertain the status of the Qur'anic text. Secondly, he endeavours to comprehend the text in an objective manner (Baidowi, 2014, p. 476). He regards the text of the Qur'an as a revelation that must be interpreted from a variety of perspectives. If the Qur'an is regarded as a language text, it becomes evident that the text is embedded in a cultural context. This illustrates the interrelationship between text and context. The text and context are inextricably linked; the former is shaped by the latter, and vice versa. The signified emerges from the interplay between these two forces. In its etymological sense, the term 'context' has a single meaning; however, in the context of textual studies, it is used in a more nuanced manner. Accordingly, an understanding of the text in isolation is regarded as an incomplete understanding. Context enables the continuous interpretation of the text in accordance with the requirements of the present era. This is consistent with the fundamental essence of the Qur'an, which is *shālihun likulli zamānin wa makānin*. Consequently, Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid endeavours to concentrate and restrict the scope of the discussion on context. These restrictions comprise levels of context that are in relation to one another: the socio-cultural context, the context of discourse/external context, the internal context, the narrative context and the reading/interpretation context.

### **Socio-Cultural Context**

Nasr posits that the Qur'an, as delivered by the prophet Muhammad, is an Arabic text. Consequently, a culture has developed around it. The cultural context of a linguistic text is defined as any element that, through its epistemological authority, facilitates linguistic interaction. Nasr maintains that in order to facilitate effective communication between speakers and recipients, it is not sufficient to merely comprehend the rules of language. It is essential that a framework is established which demonstrates that both parties are able to comprehend and interact with one another. The epistemological reference initially outlined pertains to culture in its entirety, encompassing all its constituent elements, including customs and traditions that manifest in language and its associated rules (Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, 1994, pp. 97-98).

### **External Context (Discourse)**

The context of discourse encompasses the relationships that delineate the interaction between the sender and the recipient of the message. The external context allows us to identify the influence of the discourse, specifically the socio-psychological factors that shape it, as well as the impact of Qur'anic discourse events. Nasr posits that the external context cannot be reduced to a mere background or the character and period of discourse surrounding the revelation of the verse. However, it is related to other aspects in the form of the discourse's psychological condition. Such psychological conditions are subject to change in accordance with the nature of the human being (Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, 1994, p. 103).

### **Internal Context (Discourse Content)**

From an internal perspective, the Qur'an is a text comprising multiple sections, or *juz*, that are distinct from the sequence of verses in their original descent. Nevertheless, Nasr does not engage in a critical examination of the question of whether the arrangement in question is *tauqifi* or the result of the *ijtihad* of the companions. Nasr identifies a number of characteristics of the discourse presented that, in a sense, influence the meaning. To illustrate, the discourse is presented in the form of a narrative, which on occasion includes directives or prohibitions. The content context is characterised by a number of features, including recommendations, promises, contrasts, rebuttals and condemnations, when viewed from an internal context (Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, 1994, p. 106).

### **Linguistic Context**

The most significant context is that of language, given that the Qur'an is, in essence, a linguistic text. However, in this linguistic context, Nasr's analysis extends beyond the verbal to encompass language as an integral component of a broader socio-cultural structure. This is related to the understanding that is based on the effectiveness of the mind, which makes the interpreter more influential on the text (Mufid et al., 2023, p. 5). In essence, linguistic context is the examination of stylistic phenomena at the sentence level in conjunction with broader linguistic analysis. Nasr posits that this analysis must be extended in order to gain insight into the underlying meaning. This demonstrates that linguistic context does not seek to elucidate grammatical meaning; rather, it strives to elucidate the implicit meaning underlying the text. In order to reveal the hidden meaning, Nasr employs the use of semantics. By adopting a semantic approach, it becomes possible to re-examine the meaning behind the text (Latief, 2003, p. 113).

### **Context of Reading (Interpretation)**

Nasr posits that the context of reading is an integral component of the broader system of context and is intrinsic to the structure of the text. Nasr divides this into two elements: the condition of the reader and the variety of readings that arise due to different thoughts and ideologies (Latief, 2003, p. 115). It can be concluded that Nasr's view on the interpretation of texts is that the ideology of the interpreter is a significant factor in determining the meaning of a text. This implies that the text itself does not speak, but rather, it is the reader who acts as the interpreter, and therefore, the meaning is derived from the reader's perspective. If the text is silent and the speaker is human, then reading is a constituent element of the context system that produces meaning, which is not only influenced by the external context (Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, 1994, p. 113). Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid's hermeneutics places significant emphasis on the discourse aspect, with an analytical focus on the context surrounding the text of the Qur'an. In order to ensure that the interpretation of the Qur'anic text is aligned with the requirements of the contemporary context (*shalihun likulli*

zamanin wa makanin), He regards the Qur'an as a cultural product (Muntaj al-Tsaqafi), necessitating an exploration of its historical and literal dimensions. However, it is not merely regarded as a reflective reflection of culture; it is also viewed as a factor that plays a role in determining the structure of language (Afrizal, 2016). The concept of history serves as the foundational premise of his objectivist hermeneutics.

Nasr Hamid offers a critique of the literalism of the Qur'an, which he argues is less creative in its interpretation and therefore less able to address the challenges of modern life. The Qur'an undergoes a dialectic process between text and social reality at a stage known as *marhālah al-tasyakkul*. This stage characterises the Qur'anic text as a 'cultural product', before entering the *marhālah attasykīl* stage where the text, originally a 'cultural product', becomes a 'cultural producer' (Chodir, 2019). Accordingly, he devised an objective interpretation, striving to reconstruct the manner in which the Qur'anic text is perceived based on intellectual insights (Sakina, 2022). Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid is associated with the progressive quasi-objectivist hermeneutic school of thought. In light of the concept of *tafsir siyaqi*, he posits that the literal meaning of the Qur'an is no longer the primary message; rather, it is essential to comprehend the underlying meaning, which he terms *maghza* (Syamsuddin, 2024, pp. 57–58) inspired by the term initiated by Fazlur Rahman.

### **Autentikasi Al-Qur'an Perspektif Mohammed Arkoun dan Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid**

Mohammed Arkoun and Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid are two modern Islamic thinkers who engage in discourse pertaining to the interpretation of the Qur'an. Arkoun and Nasr differentiate between the act of revelation and the Qur'an as it exists in its present form, as a *mushaf*. In Arkoun's view, the Qur'an in its present *mushaf* form represents a limited corpus of Arabic utterances, the boundaries of which were established in written form from the IV-X centuries (Arkoun, 1998, p. 93). The corpus is restricted in scope, which implies that the Qur'an is constrained by the number of utterances that comprise it. These utterances are designated as verses, which are a sequence of brief texts that are susceptible to interpretation on a global scale. Meanwhile, the revelation currently accepted by Muslims differs from historical facts and claims. According to Arkoun, absolute revelation is only possible when revelation is in the *lauhul mahfudz*, which he then refers to as the term *ummul kitab* (Saputra & Latipah, 2019, pp. 48–49). The transformation of verbal revelation into a *mushaf* thus represents a shift in the fundamental aspect of revelation, namely its dimension and mode of presentation. The factor that undergoes change is the action, response and interaction of humans towards revelation. As a result, the veracity of revelation is no longer upheld, and it can be argued that the intrinsic value of revelation has undergone a transformation due to its incorporation into the domain of historical and anthropological inquiry.

Nasr Hamid posits that the Qur'an is characterised by two fundamental

assumptions. Firstly, that religious texts are linguistic texts whose forms are analogous to those of cultural texts. Secondly, that at this juncture, Muslims require the freedom to move beyond the authority of religious texts (mushaf al-Qur'an) in order to develop an understanding that is aligned with the context of their lives. As he stated, it is time to evaluate and enter the era of liberation, not only in terms of the authority of religious texts, but also in terms of the constraints and complications that they impose on human activity in this world (Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, 2007, p. 22). Nasr Hamid posits that the Qur'an in its mushaf form is a historical phenomenon. While revelation constitutes an aspect of language that is dialectically related to culture, In the initial concept, the text of the Qur'an is regarded as God's parole, forming culture (mutij al-tsaqafi), which is stored in lauhul mahfudz. The second concept is that of the Arabic language as it exists in the cultural reality embodied in the text formed in the form of a mushaf. Nasr places particular emphasis on the second aspect, namely the Qur'an as Arabic language. An examination of the language of revelation reveals that it is both qadim and meaningful. Therefore, it is not possible to engage in a dialogue with reality in relation to the Qur'an, due to the fact that the Qur'an is conceived as qadim, which implies that its meaning has been established since it was written in the lauhul mahfudz (Wijaya, 2004, p. 11).

Despite Arkoun's assertion that the Qur'an is constrained in its corpus form, it remains open to a multitude of contextual interpretations. In other words, the Qur'anic text is communicative, open to interpretation, and capable of being understood in a number of different ways by its readers. From a theological perspective, the Qur'an is considered to be unquestionable and therefore definitive. However, from a historical standpoint, it is acknowledged that the corpus remains open to various forms of textual enhancement that may be derived from philological criticism (Arkoun, 1998, p. 94). Nevertheless, the numerous enhancements are merely theoretical and do not alter the fundamental tenets under examination. By presenting the Qur'an as a series of utterances, Arkoun highlights the fact that the Qur'an is a form of speech (parole) prior to the emergence of a written text, which is currently known as the Mushaf al-Qur'an. Arkoun posits that the Mushaf al-Qur'an represents a form of divine parole. In contrast to Nasr's perspective, which regards the Qur'an as an Arabic language, The term "langue" refers to a structured language system that exists within the cognitive framework of a society. In contrast, the term "parole" denotes the practical application of this language system in the lives of individuals (Taufiq, 2016, p. 16). Therefore, the Arabic language encompasses the context that surrounds it, given that language is inherently dynamic. Nasr's interpretation places emphasis on the underlying meaning beyond the literal interpretation. Arkoun noted that the advent of the Qur'anic text in written form has precipitated a profound transformation in the manner by which people comprehend revelation (Sunardi, 2012, p. 94). The Qur'an's teachings are renowned for their clarity and authenticity. However, ensuring their continued existence has proven challenging due to the distortions introduced by historical

and socio-cultural upheavals to other religious texts. Consequently, the formulation of Islam as set forth in the religious texts of the classical-scholastic era gives rise to the question of whether it truly reflects the teachings of the Qur'an, or whether the actual teachings of the Qur'an have been reduced and manipulated by the challenges of the times that surrounded it, including those of the Khulafaurrasyidin era, the Umayyah dynasty, the Abbasid dynasty, and so on (Abdullah, 2012, p. 20). Consequently, Arkoun posits that the extant Qur'anic text serves as a continuing source of guidance for the faithful, despite the fact that the Qur'an in its present form is primarily regarded as a written document. Arkoun attempts to deconstruct the Qur'an on a structural and historical basis in order to reveal its true meaning. Nasr, on the other hand, reconstructs the Qur'an in the context of its development in order to identify the significance of the verse (maghza).

The veracity of the revelation that has been codified into a mushaf or historical corpus is no longer guaranteed, as it is susceptible to distortion and intermingling with the interpretive ideology of an individual or group for the benefit of a particular political agenda. Furthermore, the transformation of the Qur'anic discourse from oral tradition to the text of a closed corpus or mushaf as a written tradition represents a process of historical products, thought, and language. The relationship between the three is not linear; rather, it is circular, with each element complementing the others. Accordingly, Arkoun maintains that an appropriate approach to Qur'anic reading must encompass three distinct perspectives: linguistic, anthropological, and historical (El-Mawa, 2007, p. 201). Concurrently, Nasr examines the Qur'an from a multi-faceted perspective, encompassing various levels of context. These include the socio-cultural context, the context of discourse/external and internal context, the narrative context, and the context of reading/interpretation.

## Discussion

The findings demonstrate that Mohammed Arkoun and Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid represent two significant trends in contemporary Qur'anic hermeneutics that seek to bridge the gap between sacred texts and modern realities. Both scholars reject purely literalist approaches and emphasize the importance of historical, cultural, and linguistic contexts in interpreting the Qur'an. Their approaches emerge from a shared concern that traditional interpretations often become rigid and detached from contemporary social realities. This perspective aligns with modern hermeneutical thought, which views meaning not as a fixed entity embedded exclusively within the text, but as something produced through the interaction between text, context, and interpreter. Consequently, both thinkers contribute to the development of a more dynamic and contextual understanding of the Qur'an that remains relevant across different times and places.

Despite their common epistemological foundations, Arkoun and Abu Zaid differ substantially in their methodological orientation. Arkoun's

deconstructive hermeneutics focuses on dismantling established interpretive traditions in order to uncover meanings that have been marginalized by historical, political, and theological structures. Through historical, anthropological, and linguistic analyses, he seeks to expose the socio-cultural factors that have shaped Islamic intellectual traditions. In contrast, Abu Zaid adopts a reconstructive approach that emphasizes the productive relationship between text and reality. Rather than concentrating on the critique of previous interpretations, he seeks to reconstruct meaning through a comprehensive contextual analysis involving socio-cultural, linguistic, discourse, and interpretive dimensions. His concept of *maghza* (significance) highlights the necessity of moving beyond literal meanings to uncover the broader moral and social messages of the Qur'an for contemporary society.

Furthermore, the debate surrounding the authenticity and nature of the Qur'anic text constitutes a central issue in the thought of both scholars. Arkoun views the Qur'an in its written form as a historical corpus that is open to critical investigation, while Abu Zaid understands it as a linguistic and cultural text whose meanings emerge through interaction with historical reality. Although these perspectives have generated considerable controversy among conservative Muslim scholars, they have also enriched contemporary Qur'anic studies by introducing new analytical frameworks and encouraging critical engagement with the text. Ultimately, both Arkoun and Abu Zaid offer important contributions to the renewal of Islamic thought by promoting contextual, critical, and intellectually responsible interpretations that seek to maintain the relevance of the Qur'an in addressing the challenges of modern life.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Mohammed Arkoun and Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid are two prominent contemporary Muslim thinkers who developed contextual approaches to Qur'anic interpretation through hermeneutics. While both emphasize the importance of history, language, and socio-cultural context in understanding the Qur'an, they differ in their methodological orientations. Arkoun employs a deconstructive hermeneutics that seeks to critically dismantle established interpretive traditions and uncover neglected meanings within Islamic thought, whereas Abu Zaid advances a reconstructive and humanistic hermeneutics aimed at uncovering the deeper significance (*maghza*) of the Qur'anic message through contextual analysis. Despite the controversies surrounding their views, both scholars have made significant contributions to contemporary Qur'anic studies by encouraging critical, dynamic, and context-sensitive interpretations that maintain the relevance of the Qur'an in responding to the intellectual and social challenges of the modern world.

## REFERENCES

Afrizal, L. H. (2016). Metodologi tafsir Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid dan dampaknya terhadap pemikiran Islam. *Jurnal Tsaqofah: Jurnal Peradaban Islam*, 12(2).

- Akbar, F. H., Anshari, F. A., & Rahman, H. (2020). Al-Qur'an dalam Tafsiran Dekonstruksi dan Rekonstruksi. UIN Sunan Gunung Djati. <https://doi.org/10.28248/JKH.v3i2.223>
- Arkoun, M. (1998). Kajian Kontemporer Al-Qur'an. Pustaka.
- Assumi, S. (2017). Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid dan Metode Hermeneutika. [http://islamlib.com/en/page.php?page=comment&mode=view&art\\_id=654&comment\\_id=2868](http://islamlib.com/en/page.php?page=comment&mode=view&art_id=654&comment_id=2868)
- Baidowi, A. (2014). Dekonstruksi gender dalam kitab Dawairul Khaufi (Qiraah fi Khitabil Mar'ah) karya Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd. Muwazah, 3(2), 473-479. <https://doi.org/10.28918/muwazah.v3i2.271>
- Budi, S. (2022). Menakar ulang hermeneutika Al-Qur'an: Kritik atas pemikiran Muhammad Arkoun. Substantia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin, 24(1), 16-28. <https://doi.org/10.22373/substantia.v24i1.12127>
- Chodir, F. (2019). Tafsir hermeneutika Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd. Scholastica: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1(2), 200-212. <https://jurnal.stitnualhikmah.ac.id/index.php/scholastica/article/view/569>
- El-Mawa, M. (2007). Ketika Mohammed Arkoun membincang wahyu. ULUL ALBAB Jurnal Studi Islam, 8(2), 189-215. <https://doi.org/10.18860/ua.v8i2.6202>
- Jazulli, I. (2023). Filsuf Islam modern Muhammad Arkoun. <https://jabar.nu.or.id/opini/filsuf-islam-modern-muhammad-arkoun-j5Hai>
- Kamal, M. A. M. (2019). Studi analisis terhadap sebab-sebab kekeliruan dalam penafsiran Al-Qur'an. Manarul Qur'an: Jurnal Ilmiah Studi Islam, 19(1), 58-73. <https://doi.org/10.32699/mq.v19i1.1602>
- Latief, H. (2003). Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid: Kritik Teks Keagamaan. eLSAQ Press.
- Meuleman, J. H. (2012). Membaca Al-Qur'an Bersama Mohammed Arkoun. LKiS Printing Yogyakarta. <https://doi.org/10.28918/muwazah.v3i2.234>
- Mufid, A., Massoweang, A. K., Mujizatullah, M., Muslim, A., & Yani, Z. (2023). Rereading Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's method of interpreting religious texts. HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies, 79(1), 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i1.8102>
- Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid. (1994). Al-Nass, Al-Sultah, Al-Haqiqah: Al-Fikr Al-Dini Baina Iradat Al-Ma'rifat wa Iradat Al-Haimanat. Markaz al-Tsaqafi al-'Arabi. <https://doi.org/10.284248/muwazah.v3i2.466>
- Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid. (2007). Al-Imam al-Syafi'i wa Ta'sis al-Aidiulujiyyat al-Wasathiyyat. Markaz al-Tsaqafi al-'Arabi. <https://doi.org/10.42918/JKH.v3i2.224>
- Nurmansyah, I., Nungrum, V. A., & Arraziq, M. I. (2023). Metode linguistik-semiotika Muhammad Arkoun dan urgensinya terhadap perkembangan kajian Al-Qur'an di Indonesia. Tembayat: Journal of Islam, Tradition and Civilization, 1(1), 1-14. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372750191>

- Sakina, S. (2022). Konsep Muntaj Tsaqafi dalam hermeneutika Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd. <https://ibihtafsir.id/2022/03/07/konsep-muntaj-tsaqafi-dalam-hermeneutika-nasr-hamid-abu-zayd/>
- Saputra, D. M., & Latipah. (2019). Konsep historisitas teks Al-Qur'an: Telaah atas pembacaan kontemporer Muhammad Arkoun. *Jurnal Al-Dirayah*, 2(1), 47-61. <http://jurnal.stiqlathifiyyah.ac.id/index.php/dirayah/article/view/25>
- Soekarba, S. R. (2019). Dekonstruksi dan Pemikiran Mohammed Arkoun. *Males Art Studio*. <https://doi.org/10.28918/muwazah.v3i2.271>
- Sunardi, S. (2012). Membaca Al-Qur'an Bersama Mohammed Arkoun. In J. H. Meuleman (Ed.), *Membaca Al-Qur'an Bersama Mohammed Arkoun*. LKiS Printing Yogyakarta. <https://doi.org/10.28918/LKSD.v3i2.271>
- Syahridawaty. (2020). Poligami dalam Dawair al-Khauf: Qira'ah fi Khitab al-Mar'ah karya Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd. *Al-Qadha: Jurnal Hukum Islam dan Perundang-Undangan*, 7(2). <https://doi.org/10.32505/qadha.v7i2.1978>
- Syamsuddin, S. (2024). *Hermeneutika dan Pengembangan Ulumul Qur'an (Cetakan III)*. Pesantren Nawesea Press.
- Taufiq, W. (2016). *Semiotika untuk Kajian Sastra dan Al-Qur'an*. Yrama Widya.
- Wijaya, A. (2004). *Menggugat Otentisitas Wahyu Tuhan*. Safiria Insania Press.
- Zayd, N. H. A. (2004). *Rethinking Qur'an: Towards a Humanistic Hermeneutics*. Humanistics University Press. <https://doi.org/10.28918/muwazah.v3i2.271>
- Zayyadi, A. (2017). Pendekatan hermeneutika Al-Qur'an kontemporer Nashr Hamid Abu Zaid (Aplikasi terhadap gender dan woman studies dalam studi hukum Islam). *Maghza: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir*, 2(1), 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.24090/maghza.v2i1.1563>