

## ARKOUN'S READING OF THE QUR'AN (SEMIOTICS)

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INFO ARTIKEL	ABSTRAK
<p><i>Sejarah Artikel: (Diisi Editor)</i> Sejarah Artikel: (Diisi Editor) Diterima: 05 September 2025 Direvisi: 10 September 2025 Disetujui: 18 September 2025 Tersedia Daring: 30 October 2025</p> <hr/> <p><b>Kata Kunci:</b> Teks, Semiotik, Akal</p>	<p>Al-Quran adalah kitab untuk umat manusia; setiap pesan yang dikandungnya memiliki makna mitologis yang suci. Bahasa simbolis yang melimpah dalam Al-Quran memberikan petunjuk bagi umat manusia. Namun, tafsir Al-Quran seringkali seolah-olah mengabaikan kedalaman maknanya dan malah mengikuti ideologi yang dominan. Memahami Al-Quran tidak semudah membalik telapak tangan. Teks Al-Quran mengandung makna yang beragam, melampaui pemahaman sempit terhadap teks itu sendiri. Ini telah menjadi tujuan, dari zaman kuno hingga kini, dalam membaca Al-Qur'an untuk mengungkap makna-makna tersembunyinya. Dalam kategori semiotik, teks Al-Qur'an sebagai parole digantikan oleh teks sebagai langue, sehingga Al-Qur'an tetap menjadi parole bagi para pemeluknya. Langue adalah keseluruhan kebiasaan yang diperoleh secara pasif yang diajarkan oleh komunitas bahasa, sedangkan parole adalah jumlah dari apa yang orang katakan dan merupakan manifestasi individu dari bahasa.</p>

ABSTRACT	
<p><b>Keywords:</b> <i>Contextual Teaching Learning (CTL), Mathematics, Learning Results</i></p>	<p>In this study, education is defined as an effort carried out with full awareness and planning to create a learning environment and learning process so that students can actively develop their potential. The aim of this research is to determine the effect of the Talking Stick learning model on Mathematics learning outcomes in class V students at UPTD SD Negeri 122399 Pematangsiantar. The type of research used in this research is quantitative research. The research design that will be used is an experiment, in the form of Pre- experimental Design which uses a "one group pretest-posttest design" design and the sample in this research is class students at UPTD SD Negeri 122399 Pematangsiantar, totaling 20 students. The instrument used in this research is a test. The data was tested using analysis and assisted by SPSS Version 26. The results of research hypothesis testing which had a significant influence on this research and the data that had been tested, were stated to be seen from the analysis of data obtained from the average results of the experimental class in the pretest (47,75) and posttest (82,25). Results The research obtained <math>t_{count} &gt; t_{table}</math> (12,089 &gt; 1,729) with a significance level of 0.05. So it can be concluded that the Talking Stick learning model has an influence on Mathematics learning outcomes for class III students at UPTD SD Negeri 122399 Pematangsiantar.</p>



## 1. Introduction

Arkoun as described by Baedhowi in the book *Anthropology of the Al-Qur'an* (2009: 1), namely Arkoun offers linguistic methods or more precisely semiotics. So, when someone wants to translate the Koran, they can be sure that there will be no misunderstandings. Even though people who understand the Koran come from various scientific fields. As Arkoun said, understanding the Koran is very valid if a person has multidisciplinary knowledge. It has been proven that since ancient times there have been several classical books or yellow books (as the students call them) which interpret the Koran from various scientific perspectives, such as the Tafsir Jalalain book, the Tafsir al-Misbah book, the Tafsir Munir book, and many others.

From the various tafsir books, it is sufficient evidence that Arkoun, borrowing Roland Barthen's term, "revived historical solidarity, by thinking freely," which he believes is the best tradition in *ijtihad*. In general, the Quran and religious discourse are indeed full of symbolic language. The Quran itself tells the story of Nuzulul Qur'an, so it is very necessary to study the Quran from various perspectives in order to uncover unexplored meanings or interpretations. In the world of semiotics, language is considered a sign consisting of two inseparable elements: the signifier and the signified.

The signifier is the material aspect of language, while the signified is the meaning (concept) that exists in the mind. Philosophers who study language, such as Jacques Derrida, deny that language has a final meaning. Language is a metaphor, so the meaning it evokes is always moving and changing according to the horizon of reading. Based on this logic, if religious language is a collection of texts (signs), it should not have a final meaning. This is where semiotics plays a significant role, where religious language texts become fertile ground for discovering new understandings to actualize the universal message of Islam and carry out the mission of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

## 2. Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using a literature research design. Literature research is selected because the focus of the study is conceptual and analytical, aiming to examine Mohammed Arkoun's semiotic reading of the Qur'an through the analysis of authoritative scholarly sources. This approach enables the researcher to explore, interpret, and critically analyse theoretical concepts and intellectual frameworks relevant to Arkoun's semiotic perspective. The data used in this study consist of secondary data obtained from various academic literature sources. These include scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, academic dissertations, and relevant scientific publications that discuss Mohammed Arkoun's thought, Qur'anic interpretation, semiotics, and contemporary Islamic studies. Primary references include Arkoun's original works, while secondary references include interpretations, critiques, and academic analyses written by other scholars. The selection of sources is based on relevance, academic credibility, and their contribution to understanding Arkoun's semiotic approach.

The data collection technique is conducted through systematic documentation. The researcher identifies, collects, classifies, and organises relevant literature according to the research focus. The documentation process involves reading, note-taking, categorising key concepts, and mapping Arkoun's theoretical framework related to semiotics and Qur'anic interpretation.

The data analysis technique uses qualitative content analysis. Content analysis is employed to examine textual data systematically, objectively, and interpretively in order to identify key themes, conceptual structures, and patterns in Arkoun's semiotic reading of the Qur'an. The analysis process follows several stages: (1) data reduction, which involves selecting and focusing on relevant information; (2) data categorisation, which involves grouping data into conceptual themes such as semiotics, meaning production, and reinterpretation; (3) interpretation, which involves analysing Arkoun's theoretical framework within the context of contemporary Qur'anic studies; and (4) drawing conclusions based on logical and systematic interpretation. To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the data, the study applies source triangulation by comparing multiple academic sources discussing Arkoun's semiotic approach. In addition, the researcher prioritises primary works and peer-reviewed publications to ensure academic reliability and credibility. This methodological approach is appropriate for analysing philosophical and interpretive concepts and provides a systematic framework for understanding Mohammed Arkoun's semiotic reading of the Qur'an within contemporary Islamic intellectual discourse.

### **3. Result and Discussion**

#### **Biography of Arkoun**

Arkoun was born on January 2, 1928, into an ordinary family in a Berber village located in a village at the foot of Taorirt-Mimoun, Kabilia, east of Algiers, Algeria. His family was of low physical and social strata (his mother was illiterate) with Kabilia Berber as his mother tongue and Arabic as the national language of Algeria. Arkoun received his primary education in his native village, and then continued his secondary schooling in the port city of Oran, a major city in western Algeria far from Kabilia. Then, Arkoun continued his studies in Arabic language and literature at the University of Algiers (1950-1954), while teaching Arabic at a high school in al-Harach, located on the outskirts of the Algerian capital. (Johan Hendrik Meuleman, 1993: 93).

During the Algerian war of independence from France (1954-1962), Arkoun continued his studies in Arabic language and literature at the Sorbonne University in Paris. At that time, he worked as an Arabic language and literature *aggrégé* in Paris and taught at a high school (Lycée) in Strasbourg (northeastern France) and was asked to lecture at the Faculty of Letters at the University of Strasbourg (1956-1959). In 1961, Arkoun was appointed as a lecturer at the Sorbonne University in Paris, where he remained until 1969, when he completed his doctoral studies in literature at the University. Arkoun wrote his doctoral dissertation on humanism in the ethical thought of Miskawaih (d. 1030 AD), an Arab thinker in Persia in the 10th century AD who studied medicine and philosophy. (Johan Hendrik Meuleman, 1996: 40).

Miskawaih is known as a figure who mastered various fields of study and focused on the similarities and differences between Islam and the Greek tradition of thought. Since becoming a lecturer at the Sorbonne University, Arkoun has lived in France and produced numerous works influenced by the latest developments in Islamology, philosophy, linguistics, and the social sciences in the Western world, particularly in the French scholarly tradition.

Arkoun's education and scholarly pursuits have deepened his interaction with three languages (Berber, Arabic, and French) and their traditions and cultures. This, in turn, likely influenced his keen interest in the role of language in human thought and society. These three languages represent three distinct traditions, cultural orientations, ways of thinking, and ways of understanding. Berber, Arabic, serves as a tool for expressing various traditions and values concerning social and economic life that are thousands of years old. Arabic serves as a tool for preserving Islamic religious traditions in Algeria and other parts of the Islamic world. French, meanwhile, serves as the language of government administration and a tool for understanding Western values and scholarly traditions, particularly French.

From 1970 to 1972, Arkoun taught at the University of Lyon and returned to Paris as a professor of the history of Islamic thought at the Sorbonne University. He is now retired but continues to supervise research there. Due to his expertise, Arkoun is frequently invited to give lectures and scientific talks at a number of universities and scientific institutions worldwide, such as the University of California, Princeton University, Temple University, the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies in Rome, the Catholic University of Louvain-la Neuve in Belgium, the University of Amsterdam, the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London, and so on. He has also lectured in Rabat, Fez, Algiers, Tunis, Damascus, Beirut, Berlin, Colombia, Denver, Indonesia, and so on. In carrying out his profession as a teacher, Arkoun always conveys his opinions logically based on analysis that has evidence and philosophical-religious interaction, so as to be able to awaken freedom of speech and intellectual expression, and of course, open up opportunities for criticism.

In addition to teaching, Arkoun also participates in various scientific activities and holds important positions in academia and society. He serves as scientific director of the journal *Arabica*, a member of the French National Committee for Ethics and Life Sciences and Medicine, a member of the French National Assembly for AIDS, and a member of the French Legion of Honor (chevalier de la Légion d'honneur). He has received honorary degrees, being appointed *Officier des Palmes Académiques*, a French honorary title for prominent figures in the university world, and has served as director of the Institute for Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at the Sorbonne Nouvelle University (Paris).

Arkoun's character can be considered an engaged scholar, involving himself in various activities and actions that he believes are important for humanity, because, for him, thought and action must be interconnected. As a productive scholar, Arkoun has written numerous books and articles in leading journals such as *Arabica* (Leiden/Paris), *Studia Islamica* (Paris), *Islam-Christianity* (Vatican), *Diogene* (Paris), *Maghreb-Machreq* (Paris), *Ulumul Qur'an* (Jakarta), and several books and encyclopedias. Arkoun has also published

several collections of papers and collaborative works with other scholars (M. Nasir Tamara, 1994: 18). Some of Arkoun's important works are, *Traite d'ethique (tradition francaise avec introduction et notes du Tahdhib al-Akhlaq)* (an introduction and notes on ethics from Miskawaih's *Tahdzib al-Akhlaq*), *Contribution a l'etude de l'humanisme arabeau IVe/Xe siecle: Miskawayh philosophe et historien* (contribution to the discussion of Arab humanism of the 4th century AH/X AD: Miskawaih as a philosopher and historian), *La pensee arabe* (Arab thought), and *Ouvertures sur l'islam* (introductory notes for understanding Islam).

Arkoun's books, which are collections of his articles in several journals, include *Essais sur lasensee islamique* (Essays on Islamic thought), *Lectures du Coran* (Readings of the Qur'an), and *Pour une critique de la raison islamique* (For the sake of a critique of Islamic reason). His other books are *Aspects de la pensee musulmane calssique* (Aspects of classical Islamic thought), *Deux Epitres de Miskawayh* (Two Surahs of Miskawayh), *Discours coranique et pensee scientifique* (Discourses of the Qur'an and scientific thought), *L'islam, hier, demain* (Islam, yesterday and tomorrow, a work with Louis Gardet), and *L'islam, religion et societe* (Islam, religion and society). In addition, there are many other unpublished works, in addition to several important articles, such as those in the *Encyclopaedia Universalis* under the entry "Islam, les expressions de l'Islam," "Rethinking Islam Today" in *Liberal Islam: A Source Book*, "History as an Ideology of Legitimation: A Comparative Approach in Islamic and European Contexts" in *Islam, Modernism and the West*, and so on.

Arkoun's works were mostly written in French and later distributed in translation into various languages worldwide. Some important translated works include *al-Fikr al-Islami*; *Qira'ah 'Ilmiyyah*, *al-Fikr al-Islami*, *Naqd wa Ijtihad*, *al-Islam*; *Asalah wa Mumarasah* (Arabic), *Rethinking Islam*, *Common Questions Uncommon Answers*, *Arab Thought* (English), *Islamic Reason and Modern Reason: Various Challenges and New Paths*, *Islam: Yesterday and Tomorrow*, *Various Readings of the Qur'an* and *Rethinking Islam* (Indonesian).

Arkoun's works, upon closer examination, are evidently heavily inspired by French scholars such as Paul Ricoeur, Michel Foucault, Jack Derrida, Roland Barthes, and Pierre Bourdieu. They are also influenced by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, British anthropologist Jack Goody, Canadian literary scholar Northrop Frye, and others. These influences are evident, for example, in the terms *myth* (Myth is a kind of symbol expressed in a story, a symbol is a kind of sign that has a double reference (one of which is to itself), and a sign is anything that points outside itself) and *imaginaire social* (a collection of moral and essential images that give rise to internal power possessed by every community) from Ricoeur, *episteme* (discourses and archeology from Foucault (a system of thought used by humans as a way to capture (view and understand) reality, *Discours* is the way humans talk about reality, and archeology is an attempt to explore various epistemological rules that determine a certain period) *signifiant* and *signifie* from de Saussure and Derrida (a *signifier* is something that refers or that marks, *signifie* (signified) is something that is referred to or marked), *deconstruction* (dismantling, namely an attempt at criticism from within to reveal various rules that were previously invisible and not stated in the text,

l'impense is something that was never thought of, l'impensable is something that is impossible to think, and le pense is something that can be thought), unthought (l'impense), unthinkable (l'impensable) and thinkable (le pense) from Derrida and so on.

Arkoun continues to explore new understandings of Islam and Muslims, utilizing cutting-edge theories developed in the modern Western world. He strives to combine the noble elements of Islamic thought with the valuable elements of modern Western thought (rationality and critical thinking). In this way, Arkoun hopes to create a new way of thinking that can provide answers to the various problems Muslims face today and free them from the shackles of their own making.

### **Arkoun's Semiotics**

Muhammad Arkoun is a Muslim scholar who has attempted to enrich Islamic studies with the developments in semiotics (Ruslani, 2000: 98). Semiotics is the science of signs; the term derives from the Greek word semeion, meaning sign. According to Ferdinand de Saussure, as quoted by Panuti Sudjiman and Aartvan Zoest (1996: 10), language is one sign system among many. Therefore, religion is a fertile area for analysis because religion generally uses various signs, and even humans and the universe are considered signs of God's power.

The field of study of semiotics studies the function of signs in texts, namely how to understand the sign systems within a text, which play a role in guiding readers to grasp the messages contained within it. In other words, semiotics plays a role in interrogating the codes employed by authors so that readers can enter the chambers of meaning contained within a text.

One concept that plays a crucial role in the analyses of many semioticians is the corpus. A corpus is a finite set of elements that share certain common characteristics or are subject to the same rules, allowing them to be analyzed as a whole. Arkoun's study of Islam utilizes various semiotic theories, methods, analyses, and concepts developed by Barthes, Greimas, and several other figures. One of the benefits of a semiotic analysis of the Qur'anic text is that we can understand the Qur'an more comprehensively and holistically because the semiotic approach views a text as a whole and as a system of internal relationships. This approach allows us to understand many aspects of a text that cannot be captured based on an analysis that starts from certain separate and independent elements of the text in question. Another advantage, according to Arkoun, is that semiotic analysis allows us to approach a text without any prior interpretation or other presuppositions. (Muhammad Arkoun, translated by Yudian W. Asmin, 1996: 1)

### **Methodology and Approach in Arkoun's Thinking**

In the never-ending ijihad (interpretation of Islam), there are two powerful traditions of thought: ancient Middle Eastern culture, which holds a special place in Greek thought, and monotheism, which was thought of (brought) by the Prophets. Arkoun clearly presents himself as a user of a historical-critical methodology that spreads modern curiosity, because this methodology is considered capable of exploring the study of mythic knowledge that is not only limited by the old mentality, namely by the definitions given by the positivistic historical school taught since the 19th century. Thus, the main intellectual effort that must be presented to the thinking about Islam or about other religions today is

aimed at evaluating the characteristics of historical and mythic scientific systems, with a new epistemological perspective. The aim to be achieved with this project is to develop a new epistemological strategy for the comparative study of cultures, through the example developed by Islam as a religion and as a socio-historical product. (Muhammad Arkoun in Charles Kuzman, 1988: 206)

In discussions based on the essentialist and substantialist postulates of classical metaphysics, Islam is portrayed as a unique, essential, and unchanging system of thought, belief, and disbelief, thus giving rise to superior and inferior groups (according to Muslims and non-Muslims) when confronted with the Western (Christian) system. According to Arkoun, this is the right time to end the conflicts between two dogmatic positions: the theological truth claims of believers and the ideological postulates of positivist rationalism. The history of religion has collected facts and images from various religions, but religion as a universal dimension of humanity has not been approached from a relevant epistemological perspective.

This weakness in modern thought is clearly evident in the poor, uniform, and sometimes polemical literature describing revealed religions. To overcome these obstacles, greater attention must be paid to the teaching and study of history as an anthropology of the past, not merely as a narrative exposition of historical facts. Therefore, Arkoun proposes a historical, sociological, and anthropological approach, not to diminish the importance of theological and philosophical approaches, but to enrich them by incorporating the historical and social circumstances that have always existed within Islam. Arkoun calls this method a form of deconstruction. This deconstruction strategy is only possible with a critical modern epistemology. Therefore, reason must be freed from the ontology, transcendentalism, and substantialism that imprison it, especially within the reason elaborated in various theologies through Greek metaphysics and logic. This can only be accomplished by groups of thinkers, writers, artists, scholars, politicians, and economic producers.

In undertaking this major project, according to Arkoun, it must begin with a voice or theory considered authoritative, because only it can provide a visual representation of Islam within a modern, scientific mentality and within the religious experience of Muslims. In other words, it allows us to articulate a modern vision of Islam that can also influence the community. Arkoun proposes six heuristic lines of thinking to recapitulate Islamic science and confront it with contemporary science. These six lines of thought are as follows:

1) In society, humans use a variety of changing methods, transformed into signs, where the sign system is displayed through language. These signs pose a radical problem for critical and controlled science. This problem predates attempts to interpret revelation. The sacred texts themselves are communicated through natural languages used as sign systems, and it is known that each sign is the locus of convergent actions that apply to all relationships between language and thought. The question of signs in language is an issue within the structuralist-semiotic approach of anthropological linguistic methodology. According to Greimas and J. Courtes, religion is fertile ground for semiotic analysis because signs play a crucial role in it. Semiotics can be considered a science of signification that

emphasizes only certain aspects of the scope of sign science. Semiotics, radically, is also considered a science that examines all cultural phenomena as a communication process.

2) All human semiotic products in the process of historical and cultural manifestation are targets of social change, which Arkoun calls historicity. And as an articulation of meaning for social and cultural tools, the Qur'anic text is also the target of historicity. Thus, our historical existence lacks access to absolute phenomena beyond the phenomena of our realm. The manifestations presented by ontology (the existence of the first truth) and the transcendence of theological and metaphysical reason necessarily negate historicity as a dimension of truth. This occurs because the tools, concepts, definitions, and postulates used to discover truth are constantly changing. This contradicts all medieval thought based on established essences and substances. The concept of revelation must be reconsidered within the semiotic system that is the target of historicity. Aristotelian definitions of formal logic and abstract categories must be revised within the context of a semiotic theory of meaning and the historicity of reason. This second line of thought constitutes the post-structuralist, deconstructionist approach of critical linguistics. It demystifies and demythologizes the phenomenon of scripture from all sacralizations and interpretations generated by theological reason.

3) There are various levels and forms of reason that interact with imagination, as demonstrated in the tensions between logos (disputed word) and mythos (unquestionable word), symbol and concept, metaphor and reality, and external and internal meaning in Islamic history. Imagination and imaginaire are considered dynamic components of knowledge and action. The ideologies that create mobilization, both within religious and secular frameworks, are generated and utilized by social imaginaires. The influence of these imaginaires is crucial in Muslim societies such as those in the Middle East, as rational culture has little influence, in contrast to Western societies, which also retain their imaginaires. This line of thinking constitutes a mythic approach to the methodology of anthropological analysis.

4) Discourse, as the ideological articulation of reality as perceived and utilized by competing groups, precedes faith, which is expressed, discovered, and actualized in and through discourse. On the contrary, after taking the form and roots of religious, political and scientific discourse, faith then provides direction and postulates for the discourses and behaviors that follow (both individual and collective). Thus, faith is a crystallization of the dreams, appearances, and ideas given in general by each group within the historical experience. From this fourth line, it can be seen that Arkoun's approach is a post-structuralist sociocritical semiotic with a critical linguistic methodology. And it is important to know that the word discourse requires a speaker who conveys a message (sender), a recipient of the message who reacts to the message conveyed according to the situation (context) of the conversation which is a semiological environment that determines the emission and reception of the message, and demands the existence of language used as a means of conveying the message which is of course very closely related to the perspective and way of thinking of the speakers.

5) Currently, we are experiencing a legitimacy crisis, where the traditional legitimacy system proposed by the sciences of Usul al-Din and Usul al-Fiqh no longer has historical

relevance. There is no new legitimacy system that has been unanimously built among the people. However, according to Arkoun, currently we are being challenged to be able to propose a legitimacy system for science, especially for Islamic thought by using the principles of critical epistemology. What needs to be questioned further is what the theoretical requirements of a modern theology are, aimed not only at political institutions, but also at the universal knowledge of the three revealed religions (Islam, Judaism and Christianity). Arkoun's opinion contradicts the theological guarantee of revelation or classical ontology regarding the initial existence of the neo-platonic which is based on the unquestionable legitimacy of sharia, so that Arkoun questions the existence of the legitimacy of power monopolized by a group of people. This fifth line of thought seems to be an epistemological critical approach from the historical philosophical methodology. The central point of Arkoun's thinking lies in the key term "epistemological critique," which is used in many different contexts and is perhaps inspired by the term "critique" in Immanuel Kant's thought, although it may also stem from the culture of criticism that once flourished among Muslims. This epistemological critique is aimed at the entire structure of religious scholarship, which Arkoun views as a historical product linked to a specific time and place.

6) The search for ultimate meaning depends on radical questions about the relevance and existence of such an ultimate meaning. We have no right to deny the possibility of an ultimate meaning. The question we can ask concerns how to base all our thinking on the postulate of its existence. According to Arkoun, we have a responsibility to realize critical reasoning and, therefore, we are responsible for seeking a better understanding of the relationship between meaning and reality. First, we must improve our intellectual equipment, namely, vocabulary, methodology, procedural strategies, definitions, and research insights. In this way, Arkoun acknowledges the existence of a "transcendental signifier" as the ultimate signifier, an approach that transcends the boundaries of semiotics within structural linguistic methodology.

By considering these six lines of thought, Arkoun's approach and methodology can be clearly deduced as multidisciplinary and anthropological.

#### Arkoun's Important Thoughts

Here are two interesting thoughts from Arkoun based on the methodology and approach used:

#### **Revelation and the Text of the Qur'an**

For the purposes of his analysis, Arkoun distinguishes three levels of revelation. First, revelation as the transcendent, infinite, and unknowable Word of God. To designate the reality of this revelation, the terms "al-Lauh al-Mahfudh" or "Umm al-Kitab" are usually used. Second, revelation revealed in the form of oral utterances within a historical reality known as religious discourse, fragmented in the form of the Bible (Torah and Zabur), the Gospel, and the Quran. In the case of the Quran, the reality referred to is the Word of God revealed in Arabic to the Prophet Muhammad over a period of approximately twenty years. Third, revelation recorded in notes, which apparently omit many details, especially the context of the conversation (while the *asbab al-nuzul* apparently cannot restore what is lost when a conversation is recorded in writing).

The recording of the Quran has its own history, starting from scattered, partial writings to the establishment of the *corpus officiel clos* (official, closed manuscript). Initially, this closed official Qur'an still allowed for different readings, but then it was closed with two "standardizations." The "standardizations" were, first by Abu Bakr Ibn Mujahid in 324 AH, which ended the possibility of variant readings by only authorizing seven readings, and second, by the publication of the standard Qur'an in Cairo in 1924 CE, which was then distributed throughout the world. The distribution of this text on a large scale made it impossible to rethink major issues in classical theology and could not open the possibility of an investigation aimed at distinguishing the Qur'anic fact (*le fait coranique*) from the Islamic fact (*le fait islamique*).

Qur'anic reality is transcendent, transhistorical, and open to various possible interpretations, while Islamic reality is historical and is the embodiment of one of the lines of meaning contained in Qur'anic reality. Islamic reality was born through human interpretation (both by experts in *fiqh* and *kalam*) of Qur'anic reality, which can be proven by the many lines, schools, and styles of thought, such as Sunni, Shi'i, Khariji and their various branches that seek to gain recognition as the owners of certain truths, even though they are actually political movements. This problem then continued with the emergence of *corpus interpretes* (*corpus interpreters*) which were born as a productivity of texts and not as a productivity of discourse. In fact, all of this was then referred to as sacred teachings that produced the history of human salvation.

### **Reading the Qur'an**

Arkoun realized that with the birth of the Quranic text, a fundamental shift occurred among the people in their understanding of revelation. Graphic reasoning dominated the people's way of thinking, so that the prophetic *logos* (*prophetique*) was pushed aside by the teaching *logos* (*professoral*). Furthermore, the possibilities for understanding revelation in all its dimensions have been impoverished. In semiotic terms, the Quranic text as language is pushed aside by the text as language, so that the Quran remains language for believers. Language is the totality of passively acquired habits taught by a language community, and language is the sum of what people say and is the individual manifestation of language. Therefore, according to Arkoun, the purpose of *qira'ah* is to comprehend, to understand the prophetic communication intended to be conveyed through the text in question, namely to seek the meaning intended by the text, by optimizing every possibility to reproduce that meaning. Arkoun sees at least three ways of reading the Quran.

First, liturgically, which involves treating the text ritually during specific prayer times and prayers. This liturgical reading aims to "re-actualize the initial moment when the Prophet first uttered it" in order to recapture the situation de discourse of "utterance 1." In this way, humans engage in spiritual communication, both horizontally and vertically, while simultaneously internalizing the content of the revelation. Second, exegetical reading focuses primarily on "utterance 2," the utterance contained in the *Mushaf*, as practiced by Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 606 AH/1209 CE). And

Third, the reading method that Arkoun seeks to introduce utilizes methodological findings contributed by the humanities and linguistics. According to Arkoun, these three

reading methods are not mutually exclusive and, in fact, contribute to the understanding of divine texts that humans will never fully understand.

For such reading, Arkoun proposes two critical stages of Quranic reading: critical linguistics and critical relationality. In the first stage, reading is conducted using linguistic data (such as linguistic signs, discourse modalities, syntactic levels, semantic levels, and so on) to determine the speaker's intent (locators). In the second stage, reading is conducted through two steps: the first is historical exploration (examining the classical exegetical literature and attempting to find the ultimate signifier within it through linguistic, religious, cultural, symbolic, anagogical, and other codes), and the second is anthropological exploration (conducted through mythic/symbolic analysis, examining the signs, symbols, and myths that accompany a recitation).

Arkoun's ideas have been widely welcomed by Muslim intellectuals worldwide. Some consider Arkoun's model of thought to be very different from existing Islamic thought. Arkoun's analysis differs from the orientalist model (which he also criticized) and from other Muslim thought models. Arkoun differs from Hassan Hanafi, whose kalam and philosophy are very strong, or from Sayyid Hussein Nasr, whose tasawwuf and philosophy are very prominent, and even more so from the models of Ismail Raji al-Faruqi and Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, who are more nuanced in the Islamization of science. Arkoun, a post-modernist, differs from Fazlur Rahman, a modernist who is not yet so firm and clear in outlining the methodology and scientific tools needed to achieve the goal of systematic reconstruction and even occasionally hesitates when faced with a choice between the "normative" or "historical-empirical" models of Islamic thought, which Arkoun then firmly answers by choosing the "historical-empirical" one. Arkoun even criticized the thoughts of Taha Husein and Ali Abd Raziq as thoughts that were not based on the wisdom of seeking a compromise between enlightened intellectual freedom and the religious prejudices of the masses.

However, Arkoun can be placed alongside Edward Said, Fatima Mernissi, and Hassan Hanafi, who view the results and reading of texts as political acts. Or even be considered the same as Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, who positions the text of the Qur'an as a socio-cultural product and proposes a reading of the Qur'an from a historical semiotic perspective. Because his works are within the realm of pure epistemological studies and do not directly touch on the structure of religious thought, Arkoun's work is considered by some to have little resonance in society, followers of various religions. Arkoun's language is also considered complicated, using terms and phrases that are not clearly formulated in various different meanings, making it quite difficult to understand, although it is able to raise awareness to expand the horizons of knowledge of his readers.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Nearly all of Arkoun's thoughts on reexamining Islamic thought turn out to be impractical and incomplete epistemological reflections. This is both a plus and a minus in Arkoun's thinking. Arkoun encountered many psychological barriers from Muslim readers who resisted the "disturbing" of sacred areas. This occurred because Arkoun attempted to dismantle the "sacredness" attached to various sources and areas of existing Islamic thought structures and offered alternative, historically empirical thinking.

## 5. References

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