

# Mohammad Arkoun's Theory of Qur'ānic Hermeneutics: A Critique

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**Abstract:** Mohammad Arkoun has been credited with the much needed attention to the Qur'ānic hermeneutics. A Textual analysis of his writings shows that his major concern is the methodology of interpretation and that he studied the Qur'ān for the sake of methodology. He questions the authenticity of the Qur'ān as well as its truth claim. His presentation reads more like mathematics than a textual analysis. Consequently, his methodological discussion has been largely neglected.

Mohammad Arkoun is a leading modern Muslim intellectuals preoccupied with much needed Qur'ānic hermeneutics. Drawing on postmodern discursive models, he is determined to work out an interpretative mechanism that will unravel the historicity of the Qur'ān and enrich the history of thought by giving a better understanding of the Qur'ān. He places his methodology within the *ijtihādī* parameters. Following a textual analysis, this article explicates his hermeneutics, including his theory of revelation and his triadic protocols of interpreting the Qur'ān. It also examines the validity and viability of Arkoun's interpretation of the Qur'ān or his hermeneutics.

## A Brief Overview

The role of history and language in any understanding has been widely recognized by many hermeneuts. A vehicle by which our understanding moves in history, by which the past is transported

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into the present and carried over into the future, is language. Because of the centrality of history and language in any understanding, there arises an important hermeneutical (interpretational) question as to how the text revealed in the olden days, could address people who live in a context so distant and different from the text's original milieu? In other words, how can one understand what is believed to be eternal in the light of ever changing history?

Mohammad Arkoun is one of the few Muslim intellectuals who has addressed the question of Qur'ānic hermeneutics within the postmodern frame of reference. Born to a family from a Berber region in Taourirt-Mimoun, Kabylia, Algeria in 1928, Arkoun completed his primary, secondary and higher educations in his homeland. He then moved to Sorbonne University where he obtained his Ph.D in 1969. He is now the Emeritus Professor of Islamic Studies at Sorbonne University, Paris, France. The critical discourse conducted by Arkoun on the historicity of revelation is more radical than that of many other contemporary Muslim thinkers.

From the outset, Arkoun admits that he would be following the historical approach, with its modern enhanced curiosities.<sup>1</sup> Bringing the Qur'ān on the same footing as the rest of world scriptures, he reiterates that historicity applies equally to the heritage of all humankind and that there is no alternative ways to interpret any type or any level of revelation except by relating it to its historical context. Thus, he is determined to explicate the historicity of the Qur'ān.<sup>2</sup> Considering this historical methodology to be part of what he calls *impensable* (literally translated as "unthought") in the Islamic scholarship, he assures that it has no pernicious effect on the Qur'ān.<sup>3</sup> Rather, it is part of *ijtihādīc* activities, which, in some way, may shake the conventional modes of thinking, but nevertheless will enrich the history of thought and give a better understanding of the Qur'ān.<sup>4</sup>

Arkoun's theory of Qur'ānic interpretation revolves around two main hermeneutical questions. The first one is ontological: "what is the Qur'ān or what is to be interpreted?" The second is methodological: "how to interpret the Qur'ān?" The type of answer suitable for the latter is largely determined by the type of answer given to the former.

## The Message and the Messenger in History

Arkoun approaches the phenomenon of revelation from a general perspective. His starting point is, of course, the Qur'ān, but he incorporates scriptures known to other communities, such as the scriptures of Hinduism, Buddhism and, more importantly, the Old and the New Testament. From a historical anthropological perspective, he puts the nature of the prophet in line with the phenomenon of what he refers to as the "production of great men" in history.<sup>5</sup> This perspective suggests that a prophet is a wise leader, endowed with a gigantic spirit and a bold imagination. By virtue of a continuous inspiration from God, he is able to penetrate the unknown and the horizon of human knowledge. These special psychological compositions, embodied in the personality of a prophet, manifested themselves from time to time in history. Thus, there were a series of prophets and messengers of God, who were entrusted to guide their nations onto the right path. What distinguishes prophets from other heroes, according to Arkoun, is not so much in the essence and substance of their message, as much as in the psycho-social impulses employed to mobilize their audience. These tools are conventionally known as 'wahy' (revelation).<sup>6</sup>

Having subsumed the nature of the prophet under the production of great heroes, Arkoun divests the prophets' heroic and charismatic periods of any sense of sanctity, which considers God as active in history. To recognise a sacred history requires one to submit to its demand. Such submission, in his view, would violate the autonomy of human reason.

In an attempt to account for the prophetic messages while maintaining the freedom of human reason, Arkoun maintains that the prophets came to guide people without any compulsion or force. They did not bring a criterion from heaven to force people to practice and repeat certain rituals *ad infinitum*, but only to "propose meanings for existence." These meanings are subject to amendment and interpretation within the framework of the covenant of reason that was conferred upon human beings. Arkoun cites the notion of *naskh* (abrogation) to support the subjectivity of meaning in history.<sup>7</sup>

Still, a mere suggestion of meaning cannot adequately account for the overwhelming impact made by the prophets. Which kind of

forces uplifted their mission from a simple suggestion of meaning to the shaping of the destiny of humankind since time immemorial? Arkoun does not believe that such power is due to the nature of revelation alone but that it is also due to the psyche of the audience. Since revelation functioned as a tool exuberating the psychological impulses of its audience, people in turn followed the prophets out of “the debt of meaning.”<sup>8</sup> In the Islamic context, this concept of “the debt of meaning” towards the Qur’ān, the Prophet, and *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ* (the pious forefathers of the early Muslim generations) has so overwhelmed the Muslims that they are not prepared to adopt any idea or innovation that cannot be integrated into those three predominant revered sources.<sup>9</sup>

The concept of the “debt of meaning” is another way of neutralizing revelation. There is no doubt that the impact of a reformer or a prophet is more evident in times of crisis and calamity than in times of tranquillity and prosperity. In the latter situation, there is very little to change, but when the whole nation is plunging into disintegration and it so happens that a leader managed to restore order, people would then feel indebted to him and appreciatively follow his teachings and injunctions. The process of successful reformation and restoration then creates a moral recognition of *debt* in each individual consciousness and, consequently, an adherence to all commandments of the leader. If the concept of the “debt of meaning” is applied thoroughly, the prophetic message would still have meaning in modern times. Muslims generally cherish the great experience and success of the Prophet (SAS). They believe that the more they observe his teachings, the more their condition improves; and, conversely, the more they move away from his teachings, the more their condition deteriorates. In fact, in an unusual account of the phenomenon of revelation, Arkoun acknowledges that:

Revelation is a speech directed towards action and application. It actively and continuously influences human history because it proffers practical solutions to the ultimate concerns of human condition. By “the ultimate concerns” we mean life, death, justice, love, legitimate authority (or veneration), unjust authority, social relations, transcendence, etc. The Qur’ān fulfils all these needs and fills these functions in the best manner. It has spread amidst different strata and various communities where it demonstrated the soundness of its solutions and ideal model,

its strong argumentation against spurious values, tyrannical authorities and wrong conducts.<sup>10</sup>

As far as modern history plunging into complete disarray with a collapse of the world order, the prophetic message is still meaningful as it was, continuing to create the “debt of meaning.”<sup>11</sup>

However, this view does not represent Arkoun's general view of Qur'ānic hermeneutics or be supported by it.<sup>12</sup> On the contrary, he contends that the prophetic model could perform its role only within an episteme that prefers myth to history, spirituality to positivism and imagination to rationality. According to him, the Qur'ān replaces the competing ancient symbols with an alternative symbol, whereas our positivist rationalism criticizes all types of symbols and myths and proposes, as an alternative, scientific conceptualism. Thus, he believes that as modern man has realized the historicity of the prophetic model within the general and natural process of the production of meaning in history, he cannot return to that prophetic model. Based on this, secularization of the prophetic messages is eventually inevitable. That is the only conclusion Arkounian hermeneutics could support, as we shall see below, in “the theological-exegetic interpretation.”

Furthermore, Arkoun discusses the dynamic relationship between “revelation” and “truth” and the role “history” plays in arriving at the truth contained in revelation. First, he divides the level of revelation into two. On the first level is the Archetype of the Books or what the Qur'ān itself often refers to as “*Umm al-Kitāb*” (Qur'ān, 13:39; 43:4) and on the second level is its “worldly editions” comprising the Bible, the Gospel and the Qur'ān. *Umm al-Kitāb* is the Heavenly Book, representing the revelation par excellence, from which emanated the Bible, the Gospel and the Qur'ān.<sup>13</sup>

On its first level, revelation is eternal, timeless, containing the ultimate truth. However, this absolute truth, according to Arkoun, is beyond human reach, since this archetype of revelation is secured in the “Preserved Tablet” and remained with God alone. It became known to human beings only through its second level which, however, underwent modifications, revisions, and substitutions: “Then the heavenly Book is accessible to the believers *only* through the *written* version of the books or scriptures.... This second aspect of the Book is then submitted to all the constraints of arbitrary

historicity,”<sup>14</sup> which in turn relativised and moulded the type of truth contained in the Qur’ān. Arkoun contends that the power of history is pervasive, not only in human understanding of the Qur’ān, but also in the Qur’ān’s conception of itself. He considers it the onus of modern historicists to unmask the historicity of the Qur’ānic events upon which the Qur’ān itself has long put the garb of sacredness. In other words, a modern historicist has to “historicise what has been systematically dehistoricised.”<sup>15</sup> To achieve this end, he proposes three protocols of reading/interpreting the Qur’ān: the Historical-Anthropological Interpretation, the Linguistic-Semiotic and Literary Interpretation, and the Theological-Exegetic (or Religious) Interpretation. These discussion of these protocols are ordered according to their priorities.

### **Historical-Anthropological Interpretation**

The main objective of this reading is to relate the Qur’ān to its environment in the seventh-century Arabian Peninsula.<sup>16</sup> This reading starts with a new history of the Qur’ān. The Qur’ān was first delivered orally and then written down on the available materials, though in scratch form, during the lifetime of Prophet Muḥammad (SAS). Less than three decades after his death, the *sūrāhs* (chapters) of the Qur’ān were codified into the *Muṣḥaf*. This *Muṣḥaf* remains, as it was, to the present. Still, before the *Muṣḥaf* came into existence, the art of memorization and recital of the whole *sūrāhs* of the Qur’ān had been well established.

Dissatisfied with this historical fact, Arkoun provides a very different account of the history of the Qur’ān. He generally divides it into two periods: the period of revelation or the formative period and the period of collection and fixation period. The formative period covered the Makkan and Madinan revelations when the Qur’ān was circulated orally among the companions. The fixation and written period extended from the time of the Prophet’s death to the fourth/tenth century. According to Arkoun, the final formation of the Qur’ān was not accomplished until the fourth/tenth century.<sup>17</sup> Arkoun prefers to refer to the Qur’ān in its first transition as “the Qur’ānic Discourse” and “the Prophetic Discourse” and in its second transition as “the Official Closed Corpus.”<sup>18</sup> Looking at both transitions, he defines the Qur’ān as “a finished and an opened corpus expressed in Arabic,

to which we cannot have access except through the text fixed after the fourth/tenth century.”<sup>19</sup>

Comparing the oral and the written forms of the Qur'ān, Arkoun asserts that the Qur'ān was holier, more authentic and more reliable when it was a discourse than when it took a written form. The reason for this, according to Arkoun, is that the Qur'ān was open to all meanings in its oral and not in its written form. In contrast, the use of writing tools i.e., pen, paper, etc., had relegated the divine status of the Qur'ān to a worldly book. In short, he does not think that the *Muṣḥaf* deserves the status of holiness, but that Muslim orthodoxy nevertheless elevated this corpus to the status of divine speech of God.<sup>20</sup>

However, in a sudden shift in the same book, Arkoun remarks that the distinction he made between the oral and the written forms of the Qur'ān has no implication for the authenticity of one form over the other. Only that there was a privilege of an in-depth meaning easily accessible to those who witnessed the revelation than to those who received the revelation in its written form. Arkoun's idea on this matter is so confusing that his best interpreter, Hāshim Ṣāliḥ, is not sure whether he understood him properly.<sup>21</sup>

### **Linguistic-Semiotic and Literary Interpretation**

In semiotics (the science of signs or the science that studies the life of signs within society), Arkoun attempts to demonstrate the historicity of Qur'ānic language and subsequently the historicity of its content. He advocates semiotic analysis to the Qur'ān mainly for two objectives: first, to expose the historicity of Qur'ānic language; and, second, to show how the new meaning can be obtained from the Qur'ānic text without being confined to the traditional mode of reading. In the first objective, Arkoun explains that the Qur'ān is composed of words that refer to certain historical figures. The first hermeneutical question he poses is: how can we deal with the sacred, the spiritual, the transcendent, supposedly attributed to the Qur'ān, when all its vocabularies are subject to the impact of historicity?<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, he abhors the Muslim common practice of citing the Qur'ān in certain occasions and celebrations. Arkoun brands this practice as “a semiotic manipulation” and “fundamentalism,”

because it helps Muslims to isolate the Qurʾān from its socio-historical and linguistic context and deliberately set up their own context to make the Qurʾān relevant.

In the second objective of semiotics, Arkoun explains that language in general and the Qurʾānic language in particular consists of signs and symbols. These signs and symbols, when analysed semiotically, refer to the objects by arbitrary and conventional decisions within a society, i.e., they have no natural connection with what they signify (the objects).<sup>23</sup> Arabic, as the Qurʾānic language, is no exception in that regard. On these grounds, Arkoun questions all conventional *qirāʾāt* (variant readings), claiming that they are more related to the norms of the early Muslim community than to the true meaning of the Qurʾān. As the needs and the norms of our century have dramatically changed from those of the early Muslim generations, Arkoun calls for a new reading followed by a new interpretation of the Qurʾān in accordance with our contemporary needs.

As recorded in many scholarly works, the genuine *qirāʾāt* are scrupulously attributed to the Prophet (SAS) who authenticated them as divine. The existence of multiple *qirāʾāt* is not due to the early Muslims' discretion. As Imam Abū ʿAmr al-Dānī (d. 444A.H./1052C.E.) states, it is like the prescribed choices given in *kaffārah* (expiation) such as the *kaffārah* for breaking the oath: feeding ten needy persons, or clothing them, or the emancipation of a slave.<sup>24</sup> Just as it is impermissible to do other than what has been prescribed, likewise it is impermissible to supplant these *qirāʾāt*. The existence of multiple choice is to make it easy for humankind to implement or recite, not an indicator for the possibility of open ended alternative readings.

However, on the interpretation of the Qurʾān through these *qirāʾāt*, we come to a different conclusion. Generally, Muslim scholars have underscored the necessity of reinterpreting the Qurʾān in the light of historical change,<sup>25</sup> and indeed they have produced multifarious commentaries of the Qurʾān. Arkoun's principal objective in his proposed reading could better be seen from the way he presents the nature of the Qurʾānic language. It is because the Qurʾānic language is considered as signs and symbols, decoded by early Muslim communities through their *qirāʾāt* and commentaries, thus he calls for a new decoding of those signs and symbols. From this perspective,



he describes the Qur'ān as a composition of signs and symbols that affords all meanings and opens to everyone, and that no interpretation can exhaust its text.<sup>26</sup>

Thus described, Arkoun's analysis can be seen, in a sense, as a kind of hermeneutic semiology that refers to "the understanding of a set of signs ordered into a coherent textual complex. Such an understanding will disclose the aspects of a particular text or textualization but always in relation to (or in the context of) alternative texts and textualization."<sup>27</sup>

### **Theological-Exegetic (or Religious) Interpretation**

Arkoun insists that this reading must come as the last step, after the first two readings, and that the type of theology sought must be based on the findings of the first two readings, especially the historical-anthropological reading. This is because if one continues to regard the Qur'ān as a divine text of the transcendental and imminent God, one will simply end up with more theological problems.<sup>28</sup> A type of theology required here then, he says, is a 'rational belief' based on the confrontation between the prevailing episteme at a certain point and the problems posited by a religious text, that is, between heritage and history. He points to two essential characteristics of this approach. First, any type of belief-oriented reading falls under the "dogmatic enclosure." Second, the early monumental works of exegesis contributed to the historical development of "the living tradition." Arkoun has already branded this reading as a "ritual reading," and the first two readings as more "academic and more complex."<sup>29</sup> No type of theological reading is recognized here except what might be referred to as "a secular theology," of which Arkoun is very passionately fond of. Rejecting the mainstream belief that "Islam does not separate the spiritual from the profane," he assured his readers that secularism is ingrained in Islam. Just as Harvey Cox has derived justifications for secularization from the Bible,<sup>30</sup> Arkoun too states, "Secularism is included in the Qur'ān and Medinan Experience."<sup>31</sup> This is not a logical conclusion based on historical facts, but a preconceived idea. He did declare his ultimate aim in an essay on "Islam and Secularism" where he states, "it is necessary for us to deconstruct the closed orthodoxy from within. This cannot be possible until we search for a free history

which alone could lead us to the entrance of secularization in Islam.”<sup>32</sup> Secularism is then a preconceived dogma that needs to be promoted and substantiated at all costs, even if it requires that historical facts be twisted. If Arkoun succeeded in avoiding a belief-oriented reading in order to evade the ‘dogmas’ of Sunnites or Shiites, definitely he has fallen prey to a secular theology with its own dogmas.

### Concluding Remarks

Arkoun is given credit for his attention to the importance of methodology in Qur’ānic studies. He commended the use of multidisciplinary methodologies for understanding the Qur’ān that include historical sciences and social sciences. However, it is not clear whether the primary concern of Arkoun is Qur’ānic studies or methodological studies. His writings would support that he is more concerned with the problem of method to the extent that his reader will be at a loss as to whether he is reading a book on textual criticism and interpretation, or a book on methodologies.

It is not difficult to see that Arkoun did not study methodologies for the sake of the Qur’ān, but studied the Qur’ān for the sake of methodology. Whenever a method is developed in the West, he would not be satisfied with its soundness until it proved applicable to Islamic heritage. While he was well aware that these sciences, particularly semiotics, are still being developed and no particular formulation has yet been proven conclusive, he still based his readings of the Qur’ān on them. Even in that portion given to textual interpretation, Arkoun’s intention is not to tell what the Qur’ān “says” as much as what he wants or expects the Qur’ān to say (which is one of the characteristics of deconstructive criticism). Quite informed of the role of history in understanding, Arkoun provides a new account of the history of the Qur’ān. Not only did he question the authenticity of the Qur’ān but also the Qur’ān’s own account of itself and its truth claim. Arkoun is prepared to recognize the truth of revelation, but only at a level beyond human reach. He would acknowledge the truth of *Umm al-Kitāb*, but that type of truth is with God alone. He would also recognize the veracity and credibility of the oral form of the Qur’ān, but that too is lost forever, beyond recovery. What is left in the form of the *Muṣḥaf* would not gain credence. In his

hermeneutics, there is a sense of profound “ontological uncertainty,” a theme considered by many to be the predominant characteristic of postmodern theory.<sup>33</sup> Searching for the truth/certainty in the Qur'ān through Arkoun's hermeneutics is then a utopian ideal.

Finally, the excessive use of many foreign terminologies and other new undue terminologies, repetitions, contradictions and ambiguities<sup>34</sup> renders Arkoun's writings unfriendly, especially to many Muslim intellectuals. To unfamiliar readers of how semiotics works, Arkoun's presentation will sound more like mathematics than a textual analysis. Still, not only the novices but also many experts in the field are disenchanted with Arkoun's project.

In his review of Arkoun's *Lectures du Coran*, John Wansbrough describes Arkoun's project as “one unfortunately not yet realized to any practical extent.”<sup>35</sup> Despite his liberal orientation, 'Alī Ḥarb too argues that Arkoun's method lacks creativity and coherence, and that his readings did not enrich the history of thought of either the Muslims or the Orientalists.<sup>36</sup> Aḥmad al-'Alawī also remarks that if the jinns and human beings made a concerted effort to implement Arkoun's semiotics reading, it would not lead to the Muslims' development. Their development, he says, will be guaranteed when their hermeneutics lead them to obtain from the Qur'ān what is useful for their worldly needs and the hereafter's.<sup>37</sup> This negative impression prevails even though he has a few admirers in the West, the Arab world and Indonesia.<sup>38</sup> Arkoun records his disappointment that no Orientalist or scholar of Islamic studies shared with him the conception he had long ago invented for the Qur'ān (as “the Official Closed Corpus”) and that his methodological discussion has been largely neglected.<sup>39</sup>

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## Notes

1. Mohammad Arkoun, “Rethinking Islam Today,” in *Mapping Islamic Studies: Genealogy, Continuity and Change*, ed. Azim Nanji (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1997), 221.

2. Arkoun, *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (London: Saqi Book, 2002), 89; idem., *Al-Qur'ān: min al-Tafsīr bi-al-Mawrūth ilā Taḥlīl al-Khiṭāb al-Dīnī* [*The Qur'ān, from the Inherited Exegesis to an Analysis of Religious Discourse*], trans. Hāshim Ṣāliḥ (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī'ah, 2001), 48.

3. Arkoun, “*al-Turāth: Muḥtawāhu wa-Huwiyyatuhū – ʾijābiyyātuhū wa-Salbiyyātuhū*,” [The Heritage: Its Content and Identity – Its Positive and Negative Characteristics] in *al-Turāth wa-Taḥaddiyāt al-ʿAṣr fī al-Waṭan al-ʿArabī*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥdah al-ʿArabiyyah, 1987), 176.
4. Arkoun, *Min al-Ijtihād ilā Naqd al-ʿAql al-Islāmī* [From *Ijtihād* to a Critique of Islamic Reason] (London Dār al-Sāqī, 1991), 79-80; Hāshim Ṣāliḥ, “Mohammad Arkoun *wa-Mukawwināt al-ʿAql al-Islāmī al-Klasīkī*,” [Mohammed Arkoun and the Constituents of the Classical Islamic Reason] in *al-Waḥdah: Fikriyyah, Thaḳāfiyyah, Shahriyyah*, vol. 3 (Al-Ribāṭ: al-Majlis al-Qawmī li al-Thaḳāfah al-ʿArabiyyah, 1984), 117.
5. Arkoun, *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought*, 117.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., 118.
8. Ibid., 119; “Rethinking Islam Today,” 246.
9. Arkoun, “Present-day Islam Between its Tradition and Globalization,” in *Intellectual Traditions in Islam*, ed. Farhad Daftary (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 192.
10. Arkoun, *Min Fayṣal al-Tafriqah ilā Faṣl al-Maqāl: Ayna Huwa al-Fikr al-Islāmī al-Muʿāṣir?* [From Fayṣal to *Faṣl al-Maqāl*: Where is the Contemporary Islamic Thought?] (Beirut: Dār al-Sāqī, 1993), 92-93.
11. Arkoun, *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought*, 119; *Al-Qurʾān min al-Tafsīr bi-al-Mawrūth ilā Taḥlīl al-Khiṭāb al-Dīnī*, 86.
12. Commenting on that remark, Hāshim Ṣāliḥ exclaims, “this is the greatest commendation a modern secular intellectual could accord to the Qurʾān and the Prophet’s experience.” See Arkoun, *Min Fayṣal al-Tafriqah ilā Faṣl al-Maqāl*, 105.
13. This classification is more intelligible than another one he made, by putting *Umm al-Kitāb* and its fragments on the first level and all the sciences and literature produced by generations of ‘*ulamāʾ*’ on the second level of revelation! See Arkoun, “The Notion of Revelation: From *Ahl al-Kitāb* to the Society of the Book,” *Die Welt des Islams: Internationale Zeitschrift Fur Die Geschichte des Islams in Der Neuzeit*, 28 (1988): 65-66.
14. Arkoun, “Rethinking Islam Today,” 241.
15. Arkoun, *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought*, 116; Hāshim Ṣāliḥ, “Mohammad Arkoun *wa-Mukawwināt al-ʿAql al-Islāmī al-Klasīkī*,” 91. See also ‘Alī Ḥarb, *Naqd al-Naṣṣ* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaḳāfī al-ʿArabī, 1993), 65-66.

16. Arkoun, *al-Fikr al-Uṣūlī wa-Istihālat al-ta'ṣīl: Naḥwa Tārīkhīn Ākhar li al-Fikr al-Islāmī* [The Fundamentalist Thought and the Impossibility of Originality: Towards Another History of Islamic Thought], trans. Hāshim Ṣāliḥ (London: Dār al-Sāqī, 1999), 202, n.1.
17. Arkoun, *Lectures du Coran* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1982), 43, 46; *Al-Qur'ān: min al-Tafsīr bi-al-Mawrūth ilā Tahlīl al-Khiṭāb al-Dīnī*, 113-114, 118-119; "Rethinking Islam Today," 237.
18. Arkoun, *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought*, 57, 64-65; "Present-day Islam Between its Tradition and Globalization," 214.
19. Arkoun, *Lectures du Coran*, 43, 46; *Al-Qur'ān: min al-Tafsīr bi-al-Mawrūth ilā Tahlīl al-Khiṭāb al-Dīnī*, 113-114, 118-119; "Rethinking Islam Today," 237.
20. Arkoun, *Al-Fikr al-Uṣūlī wa-Istihālat al-ta'ṣīl*, 29-30, 41, 133, n.3, 200, n.2, 336; *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought*, 51; *Min Fayṣal al-Tafrīqah ilā Faṣl al-Maqāl*, 59.
21. Hāshim Ṣāliḥ's comment in the footnote starts as follows: "if I really understood Arkoun well, he meant that ...". See Arkoun, *al-Fikr al-Uṣūlī wa-Istihālat al-ta'ṣīl*, 135, n.1.
22. Arkoun, "The Concept of Authority in Islamic Thought," in *Islam: State and Society*, eds. Klaus Ferdinand and Mehdi Mozaffari (London: Curzon Press, 1988), 70.
23. Arkoun, Religion and Society," in *Islam in a World of Diverse Faiths*, ed. Dan Cohn-Sherbok (London: Macmillan, 1991), 176.
24. Al-Dānī Abū 'Amr, *Al-Aḥruf al-Sab'ah li al-Qur'ān*, ed. 'Abd al-Muḥaymin ṭaḥān (Makkah: Maktabat al-Manārah, 1408AH), 46.
25. For more on this, see Abdul Kabir Hussain Solihu, "Understanding the Qur'ān in the Light of Historical Change," *Islamic Studies*, 42, no. 3 (2003): 393-413.
26. Arkoun, *Pour une Critique de la Raison Islamique* (Paris, Maisonneuve et Larose, 1984), 132; *Tārīkhīyyat al-Fikr al-'Arabī al-Islāmī* [The Historicism of Arab Islamic Thought], trans. Hāshim Ṣāliḥ, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Markaz al-Inmā' al-Qawmī, 1996), 145.
27. Hugh J. Silverman, *Textualities Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 16.
28. Arkoun, "*al-Islām wa-al-Tārīkh wa-al-ḥadāthah*," 25.
29. Arkoun, *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought*, 61; *Al-Fikr al-uṣūlī wa istihāhāt al-ta'ṣīl*, 65.

30. Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New York: Collier Books, 1990), Ch. 1.
31. Arkoun, "The Concept of Authority in Islamic Thought," 71.
32. Arkoun, *Tārīkhiyyat al-Fikr al-‘Arabī al-Islāmī*, 286.
33. Raman Selden, *A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), 72.
34. Because of such difficulties, Hāshim Ṣāliḥ, his best interpreter, has to add extensive comments to make Arkoun’s ideas clear. Hāshim Ṣāliḥ’s annotation on Arkoun’s, *al-Fikr al-Uṣūlī wa-Istihālat al-ta’ṣīl: Naḥwa Tārīkhīn Ākhar li al-Fikr al-Islāmī* consumes about one third of the whole book!
35. In the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 47, no. 2 (1984), 413.
36. *Naqd al-Naṣṣ* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-‘Arabī, 1993), 84-85.
37. Aḥmad al-‘Alawī, *Al-ṭabī‘ah wa-al-ṭimthāl: Masā’il ‘an al-Islām wa-al-Ma‘rifah* (Rabat: al-Sharikah al-Maghribiyyah lil-Nāshirīn al-Muttaḥidīn, 1988), 13.
38. See for example: Jacqueline Chabbi’s *Le Seigneur des Tribus: L’Islam de Mahomet* [The Lord of Tribes: Islam of Mahomet] (Paris: Noesis, 1997); M. Amin Abdullh, *Falsafah Kalam di era Postmodernisme* (Yogyakarta : Pustaka Pelajar, 1997); and Malki Ahmad Nasir, "Indonesian Scholars’ Reception of Arkoun’s Thought: A Case of His Method of Interpreting the Qur’ānic Text" (M.A. Thesis, International Islamic University Malaysia, 2004).
39. Arkoun, *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought*, 32, 86; "Present-day Islam Between its Tradition and Globalization," 214; *Al-Fikr al-Uṣūlī wa-Istihālat al-Ta’ṣīl*, 336; *Al-Qur’ān: min al-Tafsīr bi-al-Mawrūth ilā Tahlīl al-Khiṭāb al-Dīnī*, 42, 43.