

**A CRITIQUE OF  
MOHAMMED ARKOUN'S VIEWS ON THE  
QUR'ĀN, *SUNNAH* AND  
RELIGIOUS THOUGHT**

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This study critically analyses the writings of late Mohammed Arkoun, an Arab-Muslim whose post-modernist influence on contemporary Muslims sparked considerable controversy. A content analysis explores his historicist approach to the Qur'ān, which employed a method ostensibly used to remove the concept of Divinity from the text. He assumed that the holy book suffered from omissions, fabrications, distortions and interpolations between oral transmission and written documentation. This misperception is critiqued in detail in addition to his views on the *Sunnah's* legal status and his desire to simultaneously integrate secularism with religion and politics in Muslim societies. The study concludes with an appraisal of his thought and cautionary advice.

**Keywords:** *Mohammed Arkoun, Qur'ān, Religious Thought.*

**Introduction**

Contemporary analyses of Arkoun's religious writings allow us to categorise him as a liberal post-modernist Arab-Muslim with a remarkable degree of influence. However, his portfolio is explicitly historicist and contrary to classical Islamic scholarship. Having lived his career in France, his reconstruction of contemporary Islamic thought created an alchemical crucible filled with the west's worldview and secular philosophy. His

works transparently attempt to bridge the gap between contemporary Islam and the West via a secularized critical analysis that attempts to interpret the religious canon of the Qur'ān. He calls on contemporary Muslim scholars to rethink, reconstruct, recast, renew and reinterpret Islamic principles and concepts by utilizing scientific historical and sundry rational approaches epistemologically. His interpretations met with sound condemnation from scholars of *ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*. He is not only deemed a liberal but also hazardous to orthodox Islamic doctrines, jurisprudence, ethics and social welfare, especially when one considers that the orthodox Islamic worldview is inseparable from both political and social dimensions. Although he has received wide recognition, acclaim and praise from Muslim postmodernists, liberals and secularists, he has been rejected by the masses and authentic Muslim scholars.

Arkoun's views on religion are pointedly controversial among Muslims. His intellection transgressed boundaries set by the fundamentals of authentic Islamic thought and the majority of his conceptual and ideological interpretations are inconsistent with the main stream orthodox consensus. He not only disregards classical methodology but also rejects well-established theories, propositions and opinions of an extremely conscientious and systematic Muslim '*ulemā*' (*salaf al-Ṣāliḥīn*). He planted dissension and doubt as to the Qur'ān's authenticity by questioning its preservation and codification. He frankly denies the possibility of life hereafter and his propositions negatively impact Muslims and others with regard to the Divine origins of the Revealed Text.

Because he generated multifaceted dissensions and distractions that caused unprecedented scepticism in the minds of common Muslims, it is appropriate to address his methods and intellectual integrity. Since 'Doubting Everything' is a fundamental principle of Post-Modernist theory, assertions standing on this foundation often have crushing effects. His work impacted not only uneducated but also educated Muslims, particularly those affected by the globalized liberalism, post-modernism and secularism. Thus, a peculiar de-Islamizing current attends his pen that propels Muslims towards doubt.

Prior to engaging his discourse and "contributions", we present a brief biography, referencing to his education and intellectual background. We also analyze Arkoun's religious thought by applying qualitative content analysis. As most of his works are in French, our scope is limited to

translations in Arabic and English. We focus on methods used to present Islam's message to the Arab-Muslim world; ostensibly to eliminate religious stagnation and introduce historicism to counter Islam's classical approach to interpreting its religious message.

### **A Brief Biography (1928-2010)**

Born on 01 February 1928 in the town of Taourirt-Mimoun, Grande Kabylie, Algeria, he received his primary and secondary education there<sup>1</sup> and completed his first degree with the Faculty of Theology at the University of Algiers, and a PhD in Arabic Language and Literature at the Sorbonne in 1956. His mother tongue was Berber; French his second and Arabic his third language. He grew up in French schools, became a student of Islam and made his way to the top of the French university system<sup>2</sup> to become a lecturer of the Arabic language. He studied under Jacques Berque,<sup>3</sup> Robert Brunschvig,<sup>4</sup> Louis Massignon<sup>5</sup> and Paul Ricoeur.<sup>6</sup> His teaching duty in Strasbourg was instrumental to his contacting Claude Cahen<sup>7</sup> who introduced him to historians of the Annales School<sup>8</sup> that had emerged there a quarter of a century earlier.

In 1968, Arkoun obtained a doctorate in philosophy at the Sorbonne, an institution known for its secular humanist approaches to knowledge, education, science and religion. The university produces scholars infused with secular attitudes who promote non-spiritualized living regardless of one's religious or cultural affiliation, and have produced numerous Muslim modernists with an atheist orientation. Not a few graduates have become champions of humanism and played pivotal roles in various academic circles by challenging the religious worldview, particularly that of Islam. Arkoun served as visiting professor at numerous universities in Lyon, the New Sorbonne in Paris, the Pontifical Institute of Arab Studies, the University of California (Los Angeles), Princeton and Temple Universities, and Universities of Louvain-la-Neuve, Wallonia, Belgium, and Amsterdam, etc. In 1980 he was the scientific director of *Arabica*; a magazine published by Brill, and has extensively lectured in a number of Muslim countries.

He successfully established an academic reputation with monumental studies on Ibn Miskawayh, a prominent Persian philosopher and historian.<sup>9</sup> In 2002, Arkoun was appointed to the international jury of the UNESCO Prize for the promotion of peace, and also became a member of the

arbitration committee for the Arabic/French prize established by Arab ambassadors in France. He has authored numerous books in French, English, Dutch, Indonesian and Arabic, including *Rethinking Islam* (Colorado, 1994), *A Modern Critic of Islamic Reason* (Paris, 1998), and *The Un-thought in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (London, 2002). After retiring in 1995, he moved to Casablanca, home of his Moroccan wife. Towards later years his distinctive voice influenced interfaith dialogues where he promoted the equality of all faiths and motivated people to accept this as truth. A climax came in 2001 when he delivered the Gifford lectures at the University of Edinburgh.

However, recognition was lacking in Algeria where he could not be buried for fear of an Islamist backlash. He died on 14 September 2010 and was buried in Casablanca.<sup>10</sup> Primarily trained by western institutions and academies, his education lacked significant Islamic influence from Muslim scholars, teachers, institutions or organizations. His focus being Arabic language and literature, all of his writings were literary rather than religious in nature.

### **Characteristics of Arkoun's Thought**

Arkoun, an Algerian-born French thinker, was influenced by modernism, contemporary science philosophical ideals of the Enlightenment, and socio-political ideals attending the French Revolution. With no solid Islamic background, he endeavoured to establish his own method of interpreting Islamic texts, stating, "... of course we do not want to turn the whole thing upside down, but we want to rethink and evaluate everything through another new lens."<sup>11</sup> He nevertheless tirelessly strove to establish a 'western methodology of thought' within the Muslim intellectual world by using an uncompromising approach that was completely incompatible with Islamic fundamental values, principles, and essential concepts. The attempt applied contemporary human/social sciences to Islamic religious studies using history, anthropology, philology, linguistics, sociology, social psychology, archaeology, linguistic deconstruction, semiotics and hermeneutics – all to establish an exclusively personal view of religion and Islam.

His scholarship remained chiefly text-based with an insistence on placing the text within its historical context; thus treating it as a

manifestation of a particular historical consciousness. Traditional Islamic intellectual circles disregard his views, however, mostly because of their secular approach to soundly established religious knowledge. Nonetheless, while as editor of *ARABICA*; he played an instrumental role in shaping Western scholarship on Islam.

### **View of Religion**

Arkoun's discourse reveals a distinct support for Religious Pluralism and it is clear that he accepted the crucial role of religion in society but with limitations. He agreed religions offered answers to many questions regarding natural phenomena. But when it came to the role of religion in day to day living, he claimed it was insignificant and chiefly limited to rites and rituals:

In this sense, all what we call religion is only a formulation of ritual patterns and worship that helps integrate basic facts within our worldview. For example, Muslims perform physical movements when performing prayers; Christians do other physical movements, and Buddhists still different physical actions.<sup>12</sup>

Arkoun's postmodernist position espoused that religious texts and laws should be interpreted on premises of historical and psychological backgrounds. Thus, Islamic Revealed Law is not applicable to all societies, especially the contemporary world. Accordingly, each generation has respective cultural, mental and intellectual backgrounds; hence, a specific religion cannot possibly offer suitable solutions for subsequent or different sets of comperes. For him, the intellectual arena took shape in accord with diverse changes across the world. In this regard, he argued:

If we try to establish a comparison between religious and intellectual as well as mental arenas, we will notice that the latter takes very different forms or combinations according to the diversity of human cultures and for different historical moments of the same culture.<sup>13</sup>

As example, he posits that a European Muslim must have precise

ideas about the mental make-up of his own culture in particular, and then practice Islamic and western life styles, concurrently. Through this peculiar proposition, he dismantles Islam's base and lays a foundation for innovation. The suggestion is that religion is limited to certain duties and that each generation must develop proper approaches to solve their own problems, for which he assumes, there is no error in resorting to contemporary ideology. This immediately implies a negation of tradition and ancestral understanding, specifically for religion. Hence, he posits that contemporary generations should liberate themselves from the clutches of religion and the past, and stand their own grounds on reason and conscience. Arkoun therefore inspires demoralization of disenchantment from respective natural histories for all in general and Muslims in particular, which then desacralizes politics, deconsecrates values and frees mankind from metaphysical restraints over reason and conscience. Arkoun's position is, therefore, absolutely secular.

He claims religious texts are more properly understood within the context of their historical backgrounds and that one period holds no more importance or relevance or supremacy than another. This opinion raises questions of scriptural validity and its relevance to contemporary circumstances, and ultimately threatens to separate religion from orthodox origins (legitimacy). Arkoun desired to separate Muslims from their regard for the Qur'ān as a universally holistic guidance for all times and ages; and thus remove it from present consideration in a contemporary context, consequently confining it to Seventh Century C.E. Many theories from German and French Orientalists similarly called on Muslims to revisit the Qur'ān's relevance and compatibility in light of changing circumstances and current thinking.

### **Methodologies Used to Evaluate Sacred Books**

#### **Historical Method**

Arkoun's intellectual goals required several methods.<sup>14</sup> His use of the historical method can be traced to Lucien Paul Victor Febvre's<sup>15</sup> lecture on Rablais (*The Religion of Rablais*) at the University of Algeria early in the twentieth century. Arkoun then read the journal *al-Hawliyat* to learn how the School of *al-Hawliyat* attacked factual history via

elements of actual fact. He then adopted what has been attributed to Vygotsky as Cultural-Historical Psychology, which considers historical moments as inseparable from mind, brain and culture. Thus, he purchased a license to reanimate factual elements as chimera or myth.

### **Linguistic and Semantic Criticism**

Inspired by Algirdas Julien Greimas' *Semantique Structurale* (Structural Semantics),<sup>16</sup> Arkoun started the Paris Semantic Academy/Institute. He then advocated a new approach to reading the Qur'ān by utilizing semantic and critical methods of analysis. While emphasizing that the science of semantics obtained critical retrieval, he aimed to close gaps between himself and *al-Almana wa al-Din* and primary and secondary Islamic sources that had emerged from traditional legacies.

### **Deconstruction**

Jacques Derrida<sup>17</sup> borrowed the term 'Deconstruction' from Hedger. The method studies a legacy within its unified province then pulls its conceptions asunder based on a primeval foundation that deems inherent meanings impossible. This counter-intuitive premise permitted the structuring of a doctrine of historicity that profoundly influenced Arkoun's criticism of Islamic thought. The ideation inspired his criticisms to lean thereafter towards dissociation; thus clearing a path into history that facilitated a completely different approach to Qur'ānic exegeses.

### **View of the Qur'ān**

Arkoun treated the Qur'ān as a legacy that required critical evaluation by means of a linguistically-based deconstructive analysis (*al-manhaj al-tafkiki*). Thus, he treated the text as a comparative historical narration, and navigated as if it were the Prophet's (ﷺ) own speech, confessing, "my job is to address the Qur'ān with the standards of comparative historical criticism."<sup>18</sup> Hashim Salih commented that the fact that the Qur'ān addresses itself is merely an oversight on the part of Arkoun.<sup>19</sup>

### Temporal Methodology

Arkoun therefore believed the Qur'ān was humanly structured and consequently denied its Divinity, which comfortably facilitated his attempt to provide a linguistic resemblance between the Qur'ān and other man-made texts. He wrote, "*I have employed the term 'temporal methodology' so that I may evidently invite the importance of reviving the philosophical position in Arabic scholarship in particular, and in the world of Islamic scholarship in general.*"<sup>20</sup>

Arkoun also believed that the Qur'ān had passed through several stages before reaching Muslims.<sup>21</sup> As such, it had to have experienced several transformations before reaching its final state of documentation. The first stage was utterance by the Prophet (ﷺ), a method he claims remains unknown: "*It is in no way possible for us to know the primitive method and manner of how the Prophet (ﷺ) had been addressed or how he delivered the same to his companions. It ended with the death of his companions and was lost forever.*"<sup>22</sup> The second stage was transfer of the oral record to written documentation. He believes this transmission suffered negligence and textural omission. He argued that the transfer could not have been completed without omitting several passages in addition to ever-so-human picking and choosing as well as linguistic changes that generally occur under such circumstances. He therefore concluded that some of the oral record had been left out or lost,<sup>23</sup> arguing the process was inherently faulty and that portions and/or meanings were inevitably misled or misconstrued and that some matters were likely added.<sup>24</sup>

According to Arkoun, the text itself makes these distortions, fabrications and changes self-evident. He therefore believed that the Qur'ān was inauthentic, humanly fabricated, and therefore subject to critical evaluation from a rationalist perspective. This is, of course, perfectly in line with the 'doubt everything' post-modernist thesis that posits absolute truth and reality do not exist. His position caused much uncertainty and scepticism among many Muslims who lost faith in the Divinity of the Qur'ān. The Muslim Ummah must not fall prey to such careless seduction.

### The Qur'ān is Myth

Influenced by suggestions from his several mentors's, Arkoun also

attempted to determine a negative correlation between the Torah and Qur'ān. He argued it is obvious that the Qur'ān, Torah and Gospels demonstrate deep-rooted similarities regarding human existence and history. However, unlike general historical covenants referring to previous nations, all three texts refer to existing believers on behalf of an earlier Muslim *Ummah*. Given this scenario, the Qur'ān was a merely a form of simulated 'living speech' that continued to claim this exceptional status in perpetuity but for the good.<sup>25</sup> However, Arkoun regarded the Qur'ān as mythical and subject to higher criticism, after which it could be accepted or rejected.<sup>26</sup> This very sensitive deduction pushed Muslims into a controversial debate that conformed to the postmodernist derealization that 'only images of images' exist as simulations. Based on this absurd philosophy, Arkoun inferred the entire Qur'ānic narration is not factual but mythical.

### The Qur'ān's Legal Status

Arkoun explored the linguistic contention that the term 'Qur'ān' was Semitic, i.e., of Hebraic origin,<sup>27</sup> which then denies it as the source of Islamic law. According to him, the Qur'ān comprises literary figurative and/or mythical narrations with connection with the factuality of real life: "*Certainly the Qur'ān is, like other previous scriptures, an amalgam of superb myths about civilization and the human condition; being such, it absolutely should not be taken as law for society.*"<sup>28</sup>

Arkoun also regarded the Qur'ān as self-contradicting in places, and thus unworthy as a source of binding law. In his *Min al-Ijtihād ila Naqd al-'Aql al-Islāmi*, when interpreting Chapter 45:29, he says:<sup>29</sup>

... The third meaning of the term *naskh* is to 'replace a text by another text', or to repeal a previous text by a subsequent text. This is a product of Islamic jurist structuralist thought when they dealt with paradoxical passages. They were bound to accept these texts in compliance with the perceived reality of Islamic *fiqh's* epistemology; therefore, they attempted to reconcile contradictions left over by a colossal legacy of earlier Islamic scholars on law, theology, history, sociology, etc.<sup>30</sup>

### Doubting the Qur'ān's Collection

From the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) through the years of Abū Bakr (رضي الله عنه) and 'Uthmān (رضي الله عنه), Arkoun described the Qur'ān's collection per Tradition then immediately denied the validity of these narrations. Deeply emerged in Orientalist critics, he shadowed references like the *The History of the Qur'ān* by Theodor Noldeke,<sup>31</sup> as well as books by Friedrich Schwally, Gotthelf Bergstrasser, Otto Pretzl, and Régis Blachère's *Le Coran*.<sup>32</sup> A perfect mime, Arkoun applied their Historical Criticism and Hermeneutics to Islam's sacred scripture. He simply collated then transmitted their collective content and perspective without any reference to the well-ordered and faithfully maintained records of classical Islamic scholars.

Arkoun did not use the words 'Qur'ān' or 'Dīn' and held that the very word 'Qur'ān' is copiously burdened with preconceived theological associations with Islamic rites and rituals. Instead, he used 'Qur'ānic' or 'Religious phenomena'. Moreover, he claimed that the collection of the Qur'ān occurred during a politically turbulent period of struggle for power and legitimacy; therefore, he questioned the textual order of its arrangement in chapters and verses.

According to Arkoun, the Qur'ān's transition from oral to written documentation remains unaccounted for. Furthermore, he said "revelations" conveyed by the Prophet (ﷺ) occurred over a period of twenty years; therefore, there is no definitive way to know the initial state of its spoken transmission because this specific knowledge ended with the death of those who actually heard him speak. Moreover, this transition from oral to written text (*Muṣḥaf*) could not possibly have taken place without linguistic manipulation.<sup>33</sup> He says even respective *Masāḥif* records held by the Companions differed in textual order. These criticisms, in addition to various religious issues, raised serious doubts among Muslims regarding the collection of the text. However, none of these positions originated with Arkoun. All were borrowed directly from other Orientalists and Western writers whose innovations he faithfully parroted, propounded and propagated, causing much confusion and dissension.

Orientalists never attempt to examine or comprehend the Qur'ān's veracity. When they teach Qur'ān in western institutions of higher learning, they particularly and deliberately sow seeds of scepticism

and confusion among Muslims from the Arab-Islamic world. History lists several indoctrinated students who returned to their countries to unhesitatingly serve western interests in loyal uniformity with the western agenda to secularize the Muslim world. An example is Taha Hussain, the Egyptian who studied in France then returned to advocate secular education after becoming minister of education. He is noted for beginning the eradication of traditional Islamic education in Egypt and the imposition of modernism.

As for interpreting the Qur'ān, Arkoun argued that the most famous commentaries on the Qur'ān had been universally "imposed" as foundational texts and thus, orthodox dogma. He also remarked that there were as many explanations of Qur'ānic verses as there were commentators; thus claiming no limit to its interpretation. By contrast, he dubiously claimed the Christian Church had imposed firm control over textual interpretations whereas in Islam there appeared to be no boundary.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, he said the Qur'ān, like the Gospels, contains much metaphorical content that addressed the human condition but cannot be bound by rigid restrictions. The greater illusion, therefore, is to believe the latter can be effectively converted into concrete legalism and/or principles that can be applied to all cases, eras and circumstances. Supernatural data and mythical tales, as related in the Qur'ān, were therefore better viewed as literary expressions. The implication being that a modified lexicon reflecting the aspirations and visions of real emotions could only be analyzed in terms of historical, sociological and linguistic philology and attendant psychology.

Regarding the Qur'ān's historicity, Arkoun followed an approach that placed the Qur'ān on the same footing as other world scriptures. For him, historicity and context equally applied to all human legacies without exception as to interpretation, regardless of type or level of revelation. Thus, he determined to explain the Qur'ān in terms of historicity and viewed its interpretations, whether theological, doctrinal, literal, mystical or mysterious, as consequent to an intellectual heritage that was predominantly sectarian. Hence, new commentators depended on interpretations that were primarily ideological choices made by old commentators. No one had dared to dismantle these interpretations either historically or philosophically.

### Rejection of the *Sunnah*

Arkoun viewed the *Sunnah* in even worse light. He considered the *hadīth* a body of fabrications and dire reflection of the dogmatic dominance that had led Muslim societies directly into stagnation. Coming so long after the Prophet's (ﷺ) death, the *Sunnah*'s documentation had, in his view, caused a perennial form of sectarian division that remained unresolved and seriously problematic. In his view, the *hadīth* literature enjoyed such pre-eminence that sects apparently granted themselves permission to harvest and compile *ahādīth* to advocate respective dogmas and agendas.<sup>35</sup> He also claimed al-Shafi'i had made the *Sunnah* a second source of Islamic law. In addition, Arkoun attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ) some questionable matters related to certain experiences and innovations found in the *Sunnah*. Arkoun consequently created much confusion over the authenticity of *Sunnah* in total. According to him, even the term, *Sunnah*, could only be traced from 80 *hijri* onward, with al-Shafi'i being the first to use it. Hence, he concluded that the so-called '*Sunnah*' followed long after the death of the Prophet (ﷺ). Arkoun therefore assumed that the *Sunnah* was situational and had emerged from various conflicts over political supremacy.<sup>36</sup>

### Islam and Politics

Arkoun's peculiar view of religion colored his understanding of Islam's relation to politics. Being no different from Muslim secularists, post-modernists and liberalists, he followed the orientalist bias. These schools of thought teach that religion has no role in politics except in particular historical contexts. He argued it is, therefore, absurd to believe religion and politics are inseparable, but that the Muslim majority unfortunately considered the concept an unquestionable principle of faith. He also claimed that Islam conflated political factors with spirituality and treated this "absurdity" as absolute doctrine: "*If I remarked, as Muslims usually say, there is no political sovereignty on earth except it is linked to divine sovereignty, I drop into the arms of the imaginary. Therefore it is sufficient to open ones eyes a little to find that the opposite is true.*"<sup>37</sup> Arkoun emphasized that rulers during the Middle Ages were never subject to the so-called 'Word of God' but in spite of

this fact, social discourse claims that God or revealed religion governs or should govern.<sup>38</sup>

Arkoun viewed commentaries from certain Qur'ānic scholars as results of competition for power in political and intellectual arenas and that their interpretations unjustly favoured sectarian perspectives. He concluded by saying that such politically flawed commentaries have generally been treated by common masses as Holy Scripture itself.

Here, at this point exactly, we see continuous interference and entanglement between fantasy and rationality. What we call 'the Word of God' is actually a collection of texts from the Torah, the Gospels and the Qur'ān. These texts are left to interpretations by jurists and scholars who determine their meaning and significance.<sup>39</sup>

Arkoun proposed to separate religion from politics as a preeminent propagandist. He described the separation of political and economic systems from religion as the principal cause of European development in which the bourgeoisie played a crucial role:

In regard to this area, certainly we should point out the importance of the role played by the bourgeoisie, a social layer among others. This class played a crucial role in shifting the border between religious, intellectual and political arenas in the European West.<sup>40</sup>

Arkoun divided Islam into three parts: the first being religious realms (*din*) of worship, ritual and customs; the second being temporal living (*dunya*) in the material world; the third being the state, which belongs to politics.<sup>41</sup> These divisions, in his view, are unconnected and do not require the dominance of religion. Therefore, he writes, Jesus (ﷺ) said, 'give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God', because even he could not control political and religious dimensions simultaneously. Thus, there are two powers, one religious the other political. He argued that the bourgeoisie also existed and exerted a role in the development of the early Muslim society, although Islamic bureaucracy differed from the western capitalist system.

### Views on Secularism

Arkoun's approach to the Islamic text was steeped in modern secularism as the best ideology for governance of the Islamic state; a fact he thought should be acknowledged by all Muslims. In fact, he played the role of secularism's ambassador to the Muslim world and claimed there were no contradictions of Islamic principles and fundamentals, even as derived from his own life:

I am a secularist teacher practicing secularism both in teaching and learning, which gives me a kind of Islamic-secularist daily experience. I would like to say it in front of you from the beginning because some may think that I could not be part of secularization because of my Islamic affiliation.<sup>42</sup>

He made concerted efforts to establish that individual Muslims could maintain *'aqīdah* (Islamic creed) and a secular life style simultaneously. He went further to say that scholars who deny the adoption of secularism in Muslim society have misunderstood their own religion in addition to man-made ideologies: "*Islam itself is not closed to the face of secularization. In order to reach the doors of secularism, Muslims have rid themselves of psychological constraints and restrictions.*"<sup>43</sup>

He opined that religion cannot provide perfectly indisputable solutions for each generation and that no real difference between Islam and Christianity exists in this regard. Hence, religious people are obliged to adopt man-made ideologies to truly solve social, moral, economic and other problems. He believed secularism emerged in response to unreasonable requirements found in Islam's *Shari'ah*,<sup>44</sup> as such, it should be well-accepted by Muslim society.

Secularism, he said, is the great achievement of human history that ideally leads mankind's pursuit of material living. In a speech on "Secularism and Religion," he declared, "*My stay in France taught me many things and finally led to the practice and intellectual conviction that secularization is one of the achievements and conquests of the human spirit.*"<sup>45</sup> He claimed it enjoyed greater success in Christian communities and had concentrated his efforts on establishing it in Arab nations. Accordingly, secularism had two responsibilities. One to identify reality

and the true human spirit; two, to find a suitable connection between both without restricting liberty.

He strongly suggested that Muslims review their history to motivate the acceptance of ideologies like secularism. He quotes the Mu'tazilite saga of opposition to orthodox arguments regarding the creation of the Qur'ān; claiming this was a popular community that produced a commentary on the Qur'ān by the Mu'tazilite scholar, al-Zamakhshari. He says,

If Muslims were to turn to the 2nd and 3rd centuries of Islamic history they would find examples of intellectual ideologies such as the Mu'tazilah sect, which had been oppressed by orthodox Muslims at first but later became popular. So if Muslims are ready to go back to their own history, they can accept ideologies like secularism.<sup>46</sup>

Arkoun therefore believed that orthodox interpretations of Islam do not represent the genuine faith, but rather distorted the original face of Islam by linking it to political activities. The Muslim world, he claimed, would likely have remained on top if Mu'tazilites had been given the opportunity to freely disseminate their ideas. Unfortunately for Islam, he asserted, the Ash'ariyyah school reigned supreme and rejected all ideas opposed to its tenets in order to protect historical, political and ideological interests. Thus, he claimed, Islamic orthodoxy shaped the Muslim world of today by occupying the political arena for an over-extended period, despite protests that had eventually birthed Arab-Islamic nationalism. He writes:

Sunni Islam has been associated closely with political powers that had been successive since the Umayyad period. It is associated with innovations and heresies ... Arab-Islamic rationalism has emerged through the struggle against legendary knowledge; against the religious imaginary.<sup>47</sup>

### **Relevance of Islamic Law**

Arkoun questioned the relevance of Islamic law by indicating that associated Qur'ānic verses should be interpreted in their historical context

and treated as a manifestation of the particular historical consciousness and moment that produced them. Hence, he advocated a complete rethinking of Islamic civil, criminal and personal law:

The Qur'ān – like the Gospels – is highly metaphorical when addressing human conditions. These metaphors cannot be clear laws. The great illusion is believing in the possibility of converting these metaphorical expressions into effective laws that are limited and applicable to all cases in all circumstances.<sup>48</sup>

Arkoun, therefore, restricts Qur'ānic teachings to original context, thereby indicating their irrelevance in the modern era. The Qur'ān apparently, in this view, had been specifically revealed for the Prophet's Arabian society and it should not be applied to people and societies of the contemporary world:

Words should be understood by their structure in both temporal and spatial senses with respect to meaning in any language. Therefore, Allah says in *Sūrah Yūsuf*: 'We sent down the Arabic Qur'ān that you understand', which implies a direct relationship between the Arab identity of the Qur'ān and its positive mindset.<sup>49</sup>

### **An Islamic Evaluation of Arkoun's Thought**

Arkoun's treatment of Islamic principles contradicts fundamental Islamic tenets and objectives. Yaḥyā Bou'azīz of the University of Oran wrote in an Algerian newspaper that he saw Moḥammed Arkoun lecturing on Islam at an international conference while drinking alcohol between sessions. Arkoun did not deny the allegation, meaning he was not keen to practice Islamic values in public although he claimed to be the true saviour of the Islamic spirit. In 2003, a committee (the Stasi Commission) constituted by French President Jacques Chirac looked into banning the *hijāb*. Two Muslims were appointed as members, one was Ḥanifa Sharīfī (who did not wear *hijāb*); the other was Moḥammed Arkoun, who denied its validity arguing it was outdated and a symbol of backwardness. This resulted in a consensus by the Commission to ban the *hijāb* as a religious manifestation or requirement. Although born a Muslim, Arkoun

apparently never desired to be perceived as practicing Islam as a way of life. According to some of his students, whenever asked, 'Are you a believer' (?), he refused to answer. Even a few days before his death some reporters claim he did not wish to respond to this question.

Arkoun sedulously discredited the Qur'ān's sanctity as a revealed text, saying it can equally be considered or ignored. References to his discourses allow us to conclude his several positions were more that controversial as he denied numerous beliefs and facts such as life hereafter, the Prophet's (ﷺ) protection from sin, and the right of God as Law Maker, etc. His attempts to justify his interpretations as *ijtihād* in Islam were based on his perception of a vacuum rather than clear conditions and regulations. Hence, we cannot categorise his works as either *ijtihād* or *tajdīd*. What is most important is to note is that his entire approach to Islam was rooted in western influences and sciences bent towards modern liberal secularism. This biased ideology accordingly shaped his ideas on Islam's worldview.

A major fallacy was his linking of morals and ethics to science rather than scripture. This error allows the unreliability of relativism to entertain invented imaginations.<sup>50</sup> Neither can Arkoun's works be seen as efforts to renew or be diligently constructive. To the contrary, he destructively criticized religion. His works excluded faith and eliminated ethical and moral dimensions of living. He replaced the latter with materialist interpretations from humanism's portfolio, which is absent in both scruples and conscience.

Arkoun completely failed to describe how Muslims understand and perceive Islam. His perspective lacked any reference to sanctity and providential stability. He argued that Islam should be subjected to criticism like any cultural heritage. For him, the Qur'ān was not living as inherited but rather (Allah forbid) a dead mythical text bearing a historical mystique that had been turned into an imagined meaningfulness. Thus, both ritual and practical praxis of ideological Muslims no longer stemmed from an authentic text but from human minds and must be dealt with as such to remove any illusion of Divine status.

Arkoun placed himself above the great scholars who had diligently acquired the right to interpret Islamic texts. He brought in ideas that contradicted Islamic fundamentals and planted baseless thoughts with a view to specifically demolish all vestiges of a sacred heritage, wherefore

he criticized all traditional scholars and interpretations. He knew that as long as Muslims held traditional interpretations his thoughts and views could not possibly take root in the Muslim world. Nonetheless, critics of Arkoun faithfully unveiled his intellectual and scientific fallacies; for example, his argument that the Companions had different versions of the Qur'ān. But Arkoun's theories were predisposed and designed on an ideological background rather than a religious platform. He even described himself as a political thinker and not a religious scholar.

Although Islam highly values reason or intellect and holds men and women responsible based on their state of mind and erudition, Islam does not allow reason to supersede or replace the revealed text for one extremely good reason: both text and reason derive from the same and only source, from God Almighty.

### **A Critique of Arkoun's Methodology**

Arkoun demonstrated his understanding of historicity with a variety of western theoretical constructs and methodologies by applying 'Historical Criticism' to his evaluation of sacred scripture. He advocated the 'deconstructive approach' because it freed scripture from Divinity and subjected it what was assumed to be a superior form of analysis. Like a good proselyte, Arkoun had whole-hearted faith in his method; so much so, he invited Muslim scholars to apply it to the Qur'ān by arguing that Muslim development depended upon divorcing the Qur'ān from Divinity.

A drawback of Historical Criticism in the analysis of sacred scripture pertains to its examination of authenticity and veracity based on nothing more than a humanist method devised by the orientalist, Julius Heinrich, its founder. Arkoun applied it to both Torah and Gospels and produced evidence for numerous textual changes, interpolations and distortions, exactly as stated in the Qur'ān. It is surprising Judeo-Christian theologians failed to oppose such thinkers and methodology. However, the same approach in no way applies to the Qur'ān because it has been safeguarded from all such human interference and distortion; i.e., from all changes and fabrications: "*We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and we will assuredly guard it (from corruption)*"<sup>51</sup> – a passage without parallel in Judeo-Christian scriptures.

Arkoun's methodologies are also fraught with conflicts, contradictions

and inconsistencies due to his application of human scholarship and procedures. These include linguistic, sociological, psychological, anthropological, and new philosophical analyses, and specifically deconstruction as suggested by Dreda, and archeological analysis per Michel Foucault.<sup>52, 53</sup> Arkoun heedlessly denied the values of ethics as he applied these “sciences” to the Islamic legacy, especially to the Qur’ān and Sunnah. Obsessed with foreign approaches, he failed to apply his own powers of reason and contemplation. The reductionist disease presented by archeology alone had altogether subsumed his intellect.

Although the entire Muslim world had long recognized the Sunnah’s legal status, Arkoun denied its sources and rejected its jurisprudence. Strong contradictions characterized his views of mundane human intrusions as he frequently referred to meddling by Islamic scholars on behalf of vanity or political rulers. Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) clarified his Traditions and the Muslim community even reached consensus on the *Sunnah* from the time of the Companions. Hence, Imām al-Shāfi‘ī had added nothing except confirmations and reiterations of practices already evidenced by the Companions. He therefore established an epistemology of Islamic legal principles in his *al-Risālah*, as understood in modern legal terms. In other words, al-Shāfi‘ī’s *al-Risālah* is considered the first magnum opus on the methodology of Islamic thought.<sup>54</sup>

Arkoun’s greatest paradox stemmed from his appreciation of scientific methodology while, at the same time, exempting himself from the robust application of intellectual effort.<sup>55</sup> He never trusted Islamic sources although they were richly available to him and infused with numerous scientific methods and exceptional scholarship. Instead, he ran to the skirts of Orientalists who were self-declared opponents of Islam.<sup>56</sup> Arkoun’s dependence on their social sciences and humanities is like a man who seeks shelter from the desert by falling into a campfire. Most of these devices self-destruct because, in many cases, they are paradoxical when left to themselves.<sup>57</sup>

Exaggerations and overstatements with non-closure of open-ended assumptions employing pseudo-scientific terms are noted in much of his work. His applied terminology thematic exhausts translators and readers.<sup>58</sup> Examples include the following: myth, mythology, ritualistic ceremonials, symbolic, linguistic signs, primitive basis for indication, meaning and allegory, product (arising) of meaning, concord of narrative presentation,

historicity, rational faculty and non-rationality, social perception, imagination, standards of faith and non-faith; all, without exception, require reformation and moreover, are borrowed from contemporary scientific research.<sup>59</sup>

### **Conclusion**

We have presented the approaches and methods used by Arkoun to advance his reform of contemporary Muslim thinking in an all out effort to counter what he believed was the irrelevance of erroneous Muslim epistemology and the blind imitation fostered by classical methodology, which he believed had thrust the Ummah into humiliating debilitation and stagnation. This paper sheds light on the negative implications he carried into Muslim venues from his post-modernist thinking and background. We reviewed his solutions for socio-religious complexities and discussed the controversies he generated under the influence of modernism, liberalism, secularism, humanism and post-modernism. Some of these features were described as new approaches and methods of innovation that propelled many a Muslim scholar and exegete towards a new paradigm along with perplexities he invented, especially as regards to the Qur'ān and his rejection of its Divine elements in favor of a mere historical product. Nonetheless, it is impossible to thoroughly discuss Arkoun's approaches and strategies in so short a space.

We found that Jacques Berque, Robert Brunschvig, Louis Massignon, Paul Ricoeur and Claude Cahen – all proponents of Post-modernism, Post-structuralism and other western ideologies – had remarkable impacts on Arkoun's Islamic religious perspective; specifically in the linguistic realm in which he failed to discern differences between the language of western philosophers and authentic Islamic philology. In other words, Arkoun was simply their mouthpiece; a spokesperson and ambassador for his mentors. Indeed, we found no evidence or trace of any authentic Muslim scholar or intellectual who might be regarded as Arkoun's mentor or teacher. His religious thought merely mimed European secularism and those teachers he admired. Thus, his career advanced solely via western scholarship, whereby his writings reflect a western version of Islam that is vastly different from authentic Islam.

In addition, being primarily inspired by the French and German Orientalists, Arkoun vigorously criticized the Qur'ān from a completely

foreign perspective. Key thinkers like Theodor Noldeke, Friedrich Schwally, Gotthelf Bergstrasser, Otto Pretzl and Regis Blachere were pivotal in forming his perspective in this realm and in accord with western secularism. Orientalist writings resulting from different approaches to the historicity of the Qur'ān and its compilation so impacted Arkoun with ambiguities that he abandoned his own powers of reasoning and rabidly questioned the text's authenticity on their basis alone. Consequently, he advocated the non-Divinity of the Qur'ān as a mere product of historical processes.

Arkoun never utilized Islamic sources in his religious discourse and preferred to parrot Orientalist interpretations, perhaps with or without knowing the consequences. He persistently suggested that Muslim scholars do the same if they wished to develop the Ummah. His writings were so tainted by western philosophy that they remain difficult for the common readers to comprehend, although he did influence some Muslim academics and students in institutions of higher learning. Sadly, not a few were infected by his innovations and there are now institutions in the Muslim world that utilize his works in their curricula for Islamic Studies, with or without foreseeing consequences.

If inculcated and followed, Arkoun's views on religion and his approaches to scripture are exceptionally menacing to Islam, especially regarding secularism, the Qur'ān, Sunnah and the Islamic law. His 'deconstruction' of the creed is devastating. Were Muslims to consider it useful and progressive, it would ultimately cause secularization and gradually de-Islamize and convert the populace to be loyal proponents of western philosophy, methods, epistemology, worldview, culture and civilization.

Muslim activists and reformists seeking renewal and revival while struggling for holistic development and comprehensive excellence are often portrayed as extremists because their call adheres to Islamic fundamentals, values and laws in all dimensions of life. The calumny is avidly promoted by vested-interest groups, journalists, scholars, politicians and academics, despite their actually knowing that Muslims are pre-eminently peace-loving and peace-keeping. But why are Muslim secularists, modernists, humanists, liberalists and postmodernists blatantly contrary and abusive of the authentic message of Islam considered saviors or champions? Answer: they serve neo-colonial interests through false

religious scholarship under western auspices. The scale of these two realities of the present age condemns Arkoun as a reactionary extremist who rejected fundamental Islamic principles and interpreted the Message of Islam through a western lens. He unjustly criticized worthy Muslim scholarship and attempted to secularize Muslims through borrowed ideals, theories and methodologies.

Having completed this summary, we offer the following recommendations. It is safe to say that Arkoun's work is far more than merely controversial; it is destructive and menacingly deconstructive and of no benefit for the Muslim Ummah at any level. It misleads, pollutes, contaminates and confuses thinking to such an extent that Muslim society would disintegrate and enter into intense debates to reestablish the truth. The effects would cause Muslims to neglect priorities and waste time and energy without the possibility of finding any resolution or consensus. Arkoun's educational training alone testifies to his distance from authentic Islamic scholarship. Hence, his exhortations and articulations do not conform to the Islamic creed or worldview. The Muslim Ummah should be brought to understand that Arkoun was an agent of Western scholarship and propagandist for a distinctly western brand of Islam.

He disenchant, desecralizes, deconsecrates and inspires a particular Muslim secularization that liberally accepts western materialist approaches to religion that demoralize and completely disregard classical Islamic sources and legacies. He separates politics from Islam while sincerely believing that Muslims can follow Islam and simultaneously lead secular lives in absolute contradistinction to the majority view of Muslim scholars and intellectuals. To resolve and clarify all misconceptions, the latter perspective alone should be studied and robustly refuted from the perspective of genuine Islamic sources and the *maqāsid al-Sharī'ah*.

## Notes and References

1. "Mohammed-arkoun-obituary" <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/oct/19/> (accessed 4-3-2018)
2. "Mohammed-arkoun-and-the-modernization-of-islam." <http://www.resetdoc.org/story/> (accessed 4-3-2018).

3. Jacques Augustin Berque: French Islamic scholar and sociologist with expertise in the decolonization of Algeria and Morocco.
4. Robert Brunschvig (1901-1990): French Orientalist born in Bordeaux who taught at Tunis University. In 1932 he became professor of Muslim civilization in Algeria and in 1945 was appointed professor of Arabic language and literature at Bordeaux. Ten years later he went to Paris where he became director of the Institute of Islamic Studies at the Sorbonne and editor of *Studia Islamica*.
5. Louis Massignon (1883-1962): Catholic scholar of Islam and influential pioneer of Catholic-Muslim mutual understanding. Some scholars mentioned that his research, esteem for Islam and Muslims, and cultivation of key students in Islamic studies largely prepared the way for a positive vision of Islam.
6. Paul Gustave Ricœur (1913-2005): French philosopher best known for combining phenomenological description with hermeneutics.
7. Claude Cahen (1909-1991): 20th-century French Marxist, orientalist and historian. He specialized in the Islamic Middle Ages, Muslim sources on the Crusades, and medieval Islamic society (works on Futuwa orders).
8. The Annales School: 20th Century French historians who stressed long-term social history, named after its journal *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, which remains its main source of scholarship along with numerous books and monographs. The school was highly influential in setting the agenda for historiography in France and numerous countries regarding the use of social scientific methods that emphasize social rather than political or diplomatic themes and is generally considered hostile to Marxist historiography.
9. Abu Ali Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ya'qub Ibn Miskawayh, known as Ibn Miskawayh (932-1030): A Persian philosopher and historian from Rey, Iran; author of the first major Islamic work on philosophical ethics entitled *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, which focused on practical ethics, conduct, and refinement of character.
10. Mohammed-arkoun-obituary, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/oct/19/> (accessed 4-3-2018).
11. Muhammad Arkoun, *al-Almanawa al-Dīn*, Beirut, Dar al-Saqi, 1995, p. 23.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
14. Mustafah Kāhīl, *al-Ansinahwa al-Ta'wīl fī Fikr Muhammad Arkoun*, pp. 19-23.
15. Lucien Febvre: French historian best known for his role in establishing the Annales School of history. He was an initial joint-editor of the *Encyclopédie Française* with Anatole de Monzie. Febvre grew increasingly suspicious of theology and refused to view humans as being bound by forces beyond their control. He viewed religion and old ways of thinking as impractical and even dangerous in modern times. "*In the general confusion of our time,*" he wrote, "*old ideas refuse to die and still find acceptance with the mass of the population.*" He became convinced that changing religious views and attitudes was as difficult as influencing the outcome of political or social upheavals. He believed people needed better education to avoid the dangers of old ways of thinking. <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucien\\_Febvre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucien_Febvre)>
16. Greimas posited the existence of a semantic universe he defined as the 'sum of all possible meanings can be produced by value systems of an entire

culture or ethno-linguistic community'. But as the semantic universe cannot possibly be conceived in its entirety, Greimas introduced notions of semantic 'micro' and 'discourse' universes, as being actualized within written or spoken languages and especially iconic texts. To justify the quandary of signification (production of meaning), he proposed the transposition of one level of language (the text) to another level he called the 'meta-language' and attended to adequate techniques of transposition. <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algirdas\\_Julien\\_Greimas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algirdas_Julien_Greimas)>

17. Derrida referred to himself as a historian and questioned assumptions of the Western philosophical tradition and also more broadly, of Western culture. By questioning dominant discourses and trying to modify them, he attempted to democratize the university venue and to politicize it. Derrida called his challenge to the assumptions of Western culture "deconstruction". On some occasions, Derrida referred to deconstruction as a radicalization of a certain spirit of Marxism. <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacques\\_Derrida](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacques_Derrida)>
18. Muhammad Arkoun, *Tārikhiyyah al-Fikr al-Arabi al-Islami*, Trans. Hāshim Šālīh, Al-Dar al-Bayda', Al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-Arabi, 1996, p. 49.
19. Muhammad Arkoun, *Qadaya fi Naqd al-Dini*, Trans. Hāshim Šālīh, Beirut, Dar al-Tali'ah li al-Tiba'ahwa al-Nashr, n.d., p. 53.
20. Muhammad Arkoun, *Ma'arik min Ajl al-Ansinah fi al-Sitaqat al-Islamiyyah*, Trans. Hashim Salih, Beirut, Dar al-Saqi, 1st Edn., 2001, p. 84.
21. Bahu, M., *Al-Almaniyyun al-Arab wa Mawqifuhum min al-Islam* Misr, al-Maktabah al-Islamiyyah, 2012, pp. 137-139.
22. Muhammad Arkoun, *Qadaya fi Naqd al-'Aql al-Dīni: Kayfa Nafham al-Islam al-Yawm*, Trans. Hashim Salih, Beirut, Dar al-Tali'ah li al-Tiba'ahwa al-Nashr, n.d., p. 87.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 232.
25. Arkoun, *Tārikhiyyah al-Fikr al-Arabi al-Islami*, p. 125.
26. Muhammad ibn Abd al-Aziz al-Khalifal-Sarhani, *al-Āthār al-Istishraqi fi Mawqif Muhammad Arkon min al-Qur'ān*, n.p. al-Maktab al-Shamilah, 3rd Edn., 2008, pp. 14-15.
27. Muhammad Arkoun, *al-Fikr al-Islami Naqdwa Ijtihad*, Trans., Hāshim Šālīh, Beirut, Dar al-Saqi, 3rd Edn., 1998, p. 77.
28. Arkoun, *Tārikhiyyah al-Fikr al-Arabi al-Islami*, p. 299.
29. Allah (swt) says: "This Our Record speaks about you with truth: for We were wont to put on record all that you did." (Al-Qur'ān, XLV:29).
30. Al-Sarhani, *al-Āthār al-Istishraqi fi Mawqif Muhammad Arkoun min al-Qur'ān*, p. 16.
31. Theodor Nöldeke: German orientalist born in Harburg who studied in Göttingen, Vienna, Leiden and Berlin. Some of Nöldeke's works are included in *The Origins of The Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book* edited by Ibn Warraq. Several of his essays first appeared in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and his article on the Qur'ān, with some others, was republished in a volume called *Oriental Sketches*. The articles dealing with Persia were republished in a German volume, *Aufsätze zur persischen Geschichte*.

32. Al-Sarhani, *al-Athar al-Istishraqi fi Mawqif Muhammad Arkoun min al-Qur'an*, p. 16.
33. Arkoun, *al-Almanawa al-Din*, p. 33.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
36. Bahu, *al-Almaniyyun al-Uruba Mawqifhum min al-Islam*, pp. 204-205.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
39. Muhammad Arkoun, *al-Qur'an min al-Tafsir al-Mawruth ila Tahlil Kitab al-Din*, Beirut, Dar Talia'h, 2000, p. 32.
40. Arkoun, *al-Almanawa al-Din*, p. 30.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
44. Muhammad Arkoun, *Ayna Huwa al-Fikr al-Islami*, Beirut, Dar al-Saqi, 2004, p. 82.
45. Arkoun, *al-Almanawa al-Din*, p. 9.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
50. Muhammad Arkoun, *al-Islam, Auruba, al-Gharb: Rahanat al-Ma'anawa Iradatal-Haymanah*, Trans. Hāshim Šālīh, Beirut, Dar al-Saqi, 2001, p. 87.
51. Qur'an, *Al-Hijr*, 9.
52. Though he denied it, he was often cited as a post-structuralist and postmodernist. His thoughts influenced academics, especially those in sociology, cultural studies, literary theory and critical theory. Activist groups also found his theories compelling.
53. Al-Sarhani, *al-Āthar al-Istishraqi fi Mawqif Muḥammad Arkon min al-Qur'an*, p. 28.
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
56. Khālid Kabīr Ilal, *al-Akhta' al-Tārikhiyyahwa al-Manhajiyyah fi Mu'allifat Muḥammad Arkoun wa Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Jabiri: Dirasah Naqdiyyah Tahliliyyah Hadifah*, n.p. Dar al-Muhtasab, 1st Edn., 2008, p. 4.
57. Al-Sarhānī, *al-Āthār al-Istishraqī fi Mawqif Muḥammad Arkoun min al-Qur'an*, p. 44.
58. Arkoun, *Tārikhiyyah al-Fikr al-'Arabi al-Islāmi*, p. 23.
59. Khālid Kabīr Ilal, *al-Akhta' al-Tārikhiyyah wa al-Manhajiyyah fi Mu'allifāt Muḥammad Arkounwa Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Jabiri: Dirasah Naqdiyyah Tahliliyyah Hadifah*, p. 13.