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INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA  
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

**INDONESIAN SCHOLARS' RECEPTION OF ARKOUN'S  
THOUGHT: A CASE OF HIS METHOD OF  
INTERPRETING THE QUR'ANIC TEXT**

**BY**

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**INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY  
MALAYSIA**

**MAY 2004**

Malki dicit "Qur'ano credeteque audite me"

## ABSTRACT

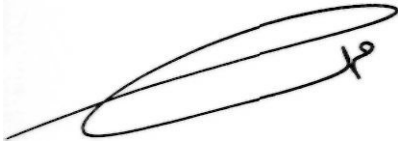
The study is *an* attempt to note, identify, and explain the influence of Arkoun's writings on Indonesian Islamic circles. Arkoun, an Algerian emigre in France, is a controversial Muslim scholar who does not only promote new approaches to Islam, but also inspires some Islamic circles to apply his ideas. One of his controversial ideas is that the Qur'an needs to be read in a critical spirit and in a version which omits portions of it. Again, he says that things mentioned in the Qur'an are also to be found in Hebrew, Christian and other scriptures; hence, he promotes the concept of religious pluralism. He accepts the common law and goes to the point of claiming that *Shariah* law is not peculiar to Islam but borrowed from other religions and cultures. The study also finds that Indonesian scholars and Arkoun have interconnections and, to some extent, show the same concerns, such as taking into account the postmodern experience to explore issues of Islamic thought in general and Qur'anic studies in particular. This study of the reception of Arkoun's views in Indonesian intellectual circles has tried to show why and in what ways they have been accepted. The study concludes that Arkoun's works have given others *an* opportunity to see Islam in the context of their own Indonesian experience and Western influence.

## ملخص البحث

هذه الدراسة تحاول أن تشرح التفاعل الذي حدث بين أعمال محمد أركون وتأثيراته و بين علماء إندونيسيا، وطريقة تلقي هؤلاء العلماء لأعمال وتأثيرات أركون. ومحمد أركون نفسه مفكرٌ جزائري مُعاصرٌ معروف بطروحاته الفريدة في مسائل الخلاف، لا يسعى فقط إلي تقديم مقاربات جديدة للإسلام من أجل تطوير فهم جديد للفكر الإسلامي، لكنه يؤثر أيضا على علماء إندونيسيين، يحاولون الآن تطبيق أفكاره الجدلية في السياق الإندونيسي، من مثل: قضايا النسخة النقدية للقرآن، التعددية الدينيّة، عدم وجود قانون أو شريعة إسلامية. وخلصت الدراسة أيضا إلى أن هناك تفاعل بين علماء إندونيسيين ومحمد أركون. كما يظهرون الإهتمامات نفسها من حيث الأخذ بعين الاعتبار لتجربة ما بعد الحداثة وقضايا الفكر الإسلامي بشكل عام، والدراسات القرآنية بشكل خاص. من هنا، فإن الطريقة الرئيسة التي تلقى بها علماء إندونيسيون أفكار أركون، لم تكن فقط كافية تماما ومهمة لترينا كيف تمت إجراءات التفاعل المشترك والحوار بينهم وبين أفكار أركون، لكن أيضا كيف فهم علماء إندونيسيون أعمال أركون. وباختصار، فإن هذه الدراسة تظهر أن علماء إندونيسيين يحاولون جاهدين لنقل أفكار أركون وزرعها داخل البيئة والمجتمع الأندونيسيين.

## APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage. (**Usul al-Din and Comparative Religion**)



Abu Yaareb Al-Marzougur  
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage. (**Usul al-Din and Comparative Religion**)



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Mohamad @ Md Som Sujimon  
Dean, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed  
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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references and a bibliography is appended.

Name: Malki Ahmad Nasir

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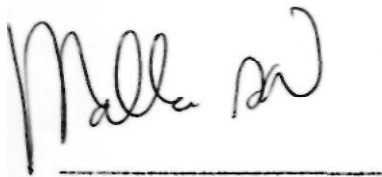
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**"Indonesian Scholars\* Reception of Arkoun's Thought:  
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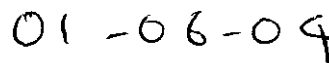
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Date

## Dedication to

**My mom who had passed away last year**

**My wife, Ristaurina, and My first baby**

**Muhammad Dhiyaul Kasyfi Sulaksana**

I would like to thank my first reader Prof. Dr. H. Hartono Zain for his supervision, useful suggestions, generous guidance, and advice throughout the completion of this work. My special thanks also go to the faculty department of *Uinir at-Din* and Comparative Religion, who followed my lectures on some certain subjects. Besides, I also would like to thank my first supervisor Prof. Dr. Paul Lefina, particularly for allowing me to study the subject of Latin language and writing of library which is the theme of my thesis.

I would like to thank my second supervisor Prof. Dr. H. Hartono Zain for his supervision, useful suggestions, generous guidance, and advice throughout the completion of this work. My special thanks also go to the faculty department of *Uinir at-Din* and Comparative Religion, who followed my lectures on some certain subjects. Besides, I also would like to thank my second supervisor Prof. Dr. H. Hartono Zain, particularly for allowing me to study the subject of Latin language and writing of library which is the theme of my thesis. I also would like to thank my friends and neighbors at Cirebon, especially my friends, my wife and my first baby, who always support and encourage me to complete this work. I also would like to thank my friends and neighbors at Cirebon, especially my friends, my wife and my first baby, who always support and encourage me to complete this work. I also would like to thank my friends and neighbors at Cirebon, especially my friends, my wife and my first baby, who always support and encourage me to complete this work. I also would like to thank my friends and neighbors at Cirebon, especially my friends, my wife and my first baby, who always support and encourage me to complete this work.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Praise be to Allah who had bestowed on me the strength, health, patience and dynamism in completing this thesis. *Alhamdulillah*. Finally, I did it. I would like to express my thanks to all those who so kindly had contributed a great deal and assisted me for completing my thesis. First of all, my special gratitude is to my supervisor Prof. Dr. Abou Yaareb Marzougui and my second reader Prof Dr. Ibrahim Zain who have given his supervision, useful suggestions, generous guidance, advices and encouragements throughout the completion of this work. My special thanks also go to all the staff in the department of *Usul al-Din* and Comparative Religion, who had allowed me to follow lectures on some certain subjects. Besides, I should also convey my thanks as well to I STAC and Prof. Dr. Paul Lething, particularly, for allowing me to pursue the subject of Latin language and using its Library, which is so fantastic.

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Finally, I hope that in spite of many technical and perchance more serious mistaken, this thesis will add its humble contribution to the study of Islamic thought in so doing bringing the reader nearer to a better understanding of Islam

Sungai Pusu, 1 January 2004

Malki Ahmad Nasir

## Transliteration

'	=	ا	z	=	ز	f	=	ف
b	=	ب	s	=	س	q	=	ق
t	=	ت	sh	=	ش	k	=	ك
th	=	ث	ṣ	=	ص	l	=	ل
j	=	ج	ḍ	=	ض	m	=	م
ḥ	=	ح	ṭ	=	ط	n	=	ن
kh	=	خ	ẓ	=	ظ	h	=	ه
d	=	د	'	=	ع	w	=	و
dh	=	ذ	gh	=	غ	y	=	ي
r	=	ر						

Short:            a = اَ ;    i = اِ ;    u = اُ

Long:            ā = اَآ ;    ī = اِي ;    ū = اُو

Diphthong:    ay = اِي ;    aw = اُو

                  iyy = اِيَّ

### Exceptional:

The famous and contemporary Muslim name, such as Fazlur Rahman, Mohammed Arkoun, and Indonesian name, should not suppose to be written in Arabic transliteration owing to their popular usage.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .....	iv
Abstract in Arabic.....	v
Approval Page.....	vi
Declaration.....	vii
Acknowledgements.....	x
Transliteration.....	xii
Table of Contents.....	xiii

### **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION..... 1**

Background Study.....	1
Statement of The Problem.....	3
Objective of The Research.....	4
Review of Literature.....	4
Research Methodology.....	8

### **CHAPTER TWO: DESCRIPTION AND CLASIFICATION OF INDONESIAN SCHOLAR STUDIES ON ARKOUN' THOUGHT..... 10**

Qualitative Classification.....	11
Perspectives.....	11
Methods.....	12
Approaches.....	13
References.....	14
Quantitative Classification.....	14

<b>CHAPTER THREE: ARKOUN'S PERSPECTIVE.....</b>	<b>16</b>
Critique of Islamic Reason.....	17
Epistemology of Islamic Reason.....	18
Theory of Archeology.....	20
Theory of Applied Islamology.....	23
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: INDONESIAN SCHOLARS' RECEPTION OF MOHAMMED ARKOUN' THOUGHT.....</b>	<b>25</b>
Indonesian Scholar's Texts of Reception of Arkoun's Thought.....	26
Books.....	26
Articles.....	30
Characteristics of Indonesian Scholars' Works.....	31
Historical Vision.....	32
Deconstructionist Vision.....	40
Indonesian Scholars' Reception of Arkoun's Work.....	47
An Appraisal of The Reception.....	49
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUDING REMARKS.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAFY.....</b>	<b>54</b>

# Chapter I

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

The decline of the Muslim *Ummah* is generally recognized to be the consequences of the decline of Islamic thought, whereas, the lack of emphasis of the empirical and historical methods in the construction of Islamic thought is identified as one of the main causes for its stagnation.<sup>1</sup>

However, the crisis of contemporary Muslim thought in general is a conglomeration of different methodologies and, therefore, does not manifest originality. The only reasonable and practical solution lies, as argued by the pioneering thinkers, in the reconstruction of Islamic thought. To promote it, Muslim thinkers should adopt a new methodology of *Tawhidic* paradigm.<sup>2</sup> The flourishing thought thus will demonstrate creativity and *Ijtihad* spirit and, as a result, will be competent to meet the challenges of modernity. It may stand as a challenge by itself as well as a guide and model for a peaceful and just civilization. Nevertheless, this is not *an* easy task. Therefore, this requires effort of all the intellectuals of the Muslim *Ummah* for decades.

According to Taha Jabir al-'Alwani, recent approaches of Muslim scholars can be identified in the present state of thought among Muslim academics;

Firstly, it can be described that the traditionalist approach considers the "traditional" thought of the *umamah* to be self-sufficient *and* capable of being

Muhammad Mumtaz Ali, "Application of Integrated methods in Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage Disciplines." *Unpublished research*. IIUM Malaysia, p. 1.

Muhammad Mumtaz Ali, "Reconstruction of Islamic Thought and Civilization." *Unpublished research*. HUM Malaysia, p. 2.

presented as it is or with very little alteration. This **approach** suggests that the *ummah's* contemporary intellectual life can be formed **and** organized **and** that the structure of its civilization can be built **on** this basis. **Secondly**, it considers contemporary Western thought **and** its world-view —its concepts of existence, of **life and of man-** to be **universal**, without it, a **modern** culture, **and** civilization cannot be built. This **tendency** maintains that Western thought must be adopted **in lolo**, **and** any consequent negative aspects are the **price** that must be **paid** if a modern culture **and** civilization are to be established. They attempt to reconstruct a tradition **in** Islam, which is ready to be **up** to date and responsive to the challenges **and** the current issues. Lastly, it is the eclectic approach. It contends that one must select from traditional thought what is most **sound**, **and** from "modern" contemporary thought that one considers **and** proves to be correct. **And** it is weld the two to form **an** intellectual structure that **will** provide a guaranteed basis for achieving what is required.<sup>3</sup>

The trend of a contemporary Islamic thinker like Sayyid Hussein Nasr is the first trend of Islamic thinker **in** the above categorization. Whereas among those who promote a new trend of Islamic thought (a *genre* of modernism), **and** who accommodate science **and** technology as the way of interpreting **and** **defining** Islam (read: the **Qur'an**), are **Fazlur Rahman**, Hasan **Hanafi**, **Muhammad Iqbal**, Bassam **Tibi** **and** Mohammed **Arkoun**.<sup>4</sup>

It is understood that the second trend is more interesting **and** more relevant to the challenges of modern era, even though, there are so many debates arguing the pros and cons. One reason, why they define Islam as a modern-cultural movement, as stated by **Iqbal**, is that they reject a static conventional way of thinking about the universe and instead approve a dynamic view.<sup>5</sup>

**Since** modern age has been brought a socio-cultural transformation, it **has** influenced people's orientation of thought. It **occurs** not only **in** socio-cultural, economic, and

Taha Jabir Al-'Alwani, "Toward an Islamic Alternative In Thought and Knowledge." (*The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences (AJISS)*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1989.). pp. 1-4.

Some scholars mention that Mohammed Arkoun is a pioneer of post-modernism or metamodernism of Muslim thinker. See Johan Hendrik Meuleman, *Tradisl, Kemodernan, dan Metamodernisme: Memperbincangkan Pemikiran Mohammad Arkoun*. (Yogyakarta: Lkis, 1996)

Sir Mohammed Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 1981), p. 146.

political fields, but also in philosophical and religious ones. In this context, Islam as a religion is an exception. Islam as a worldview competes with modern objective rationality. Unfortunately, history has witnessed the defeat of Islam, and Islam has turned out as a material of “archaeology.”<sup>6</sup>

This fact has born an idea to force in Muslims the need to reform their understanding of Islam. This necessary to reform undeniably results in a differentiation between the concepts of conservatism and progressivism in understanding Islam.

This proposal will present one of the thinkers, i.e. Mohammed Arkoun, on an issue of the reconstruction of Islamic thought, particularly in a critical study of the Qur’anic text. Arkoun is phenomenal as another pioneering leader of Islamic thinker in the context of modernism. He recently clarifies that “approaches of the current Western methods to Islam” should be seen and understood as intellectual and methodological movements for the development of Islamic thought in order to revitalize Islamic civilization. He has been influencing Indonesian scholars. In many universities, especially in the field of Islamic studies, his thought is examined. This is why a scholar describes him as “un des symbols de la lecture herméneutique.”<sup>7</sup>

## 1.2 Statement of Problem

Generally speaking, this research aims at investigating the reception of Indonesian scholars toward Arkoun’s method of interpreting the Qur’anic text. Specifically, this research will attempt to answer the following questions:

---

<sup>6</sup> See Malki Ahmad Nasir, *Book review of Hasan Hanafi: Muqaddimah fi ‘ilm al-‘Istighrâb*, (IIUM: unpublished research, 2002), p. 1

<sup>7</sup> Yusup Rahman, “The hermeneutical theory of Naşr Hâmid ‘Abū Zayd: An Analytical Study of His Method of Interpreting the Qur’ân ” *PhD’s Thesis*. (Montreal: McGill University, 2001), p. 4.



1. How does Arkoun explain Islamic thought with his methodology?
2. What method does Arkoun apply in his research, particularly on the Qur'anic text?
3. How far has Arkoun's thought influenced Indonesian scholars?
4. How do Indonesian scholars react to (receive) his method?
5. Is it proper to gain new approach and methodology in understanding Islamic thought especially for Muslim scholars from "outsiders" or non-Muslim Scholars?

### 1.3 Objectives of Research

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To examine Arkoun's method of interpreting the issue of Islamic thought.
2. To examine Arkoun's approaches, called deconstruction, historical and normative views, and hermeneutic theory on research on Islam in the context of understanding the Qur'anic text in particular.
3. To explain the influence of Arkoun's thought in Indonesia up to present day.
4. To describe the reception of Indonesian scholars, the arguments for and against Arkoun's work, then to analyze some understanding and misunderstanding of their reception of Arkoun's work.

### 1.4 Review of Literature

There are a number of studies that deal with Indonesian scholars' reception of Arkoun's method, which are relevant to this study. The existing studies can be reviewed by classifying them into two categories based on the scope and analysis of the subject; firstly, the general view of Mohammed Arkoun on Islamic thought and specific view of his method of interpreting, particularly, on the Qur'anic text. Secondly, it is the reception of Indonesian scholars to Mohammed Arkoun's methods

of interpreting the issue of Islamic thought generally and the Qur'anic text particularly.

#### 1.4.1. General view of Mohammed Arkoun on Islamic Thought

The general Studies on Mohammed Arkoun's Islamic thought and his method of interpreting the Qur'anic text are so numerous whether they are written by himself or by other researchers.<sup>8</sup> Most of them systematically cover his idea in the field of epistemology and presents his theories, approaches, and methods to Islam such as his critics toward the closed exegeses of Islamic thought in general or to the Qur'anic text specifically.

The title of his two books, "*Tarikhyyat al-Fikr al-'Arabi al-Islami* " or "*Nalar Islami dan Nalar Modern: Berbagai Tantangan dan Jalan Baru* " translated into Indonesian

<sup>8</sup> Muhammad 'Arkun, *Al-Islam wa al-lladathah*, (Beirut: Muwafiq, 1989). Idem, "The Notion of Revelation," *Die Welt des Islami XXVIII*, 1988. Idem, *Rethinking Islam Today*, (Georgetown Washington: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, 1987). Idem, *Min al-Ijtihad ila Naqd al-'Aql al-Islami* (Beirut: Dar al-Saql, 1991). Idem, "Islam, Europe, the West: Meaning at stake and the Will to power," in *Islam and Modernity: Muslim Intellectual Response*. J. Cooper, R. Nettle and M. Mahmoud (eds), (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998). Idem, *The Unthought In Contemporary Islamic Thought*, (London. Saqi Books, 2002). Idem, *Tarikhyyat al-Fikr al-'Arabi al-Islami*, (Beirut: Markaz al-Inma' al-Qawmi, 1986), in Indonesian edition, *Nalar Islami dan Nalar Modern: Berbagai Tantangan dan Jalan Baru*, trans. By Rahayu S. Hidayat, (Jakarta: INIS, 1994). Idem, *Berbagai Pembacaan Qur'an*, trans. from Lectures du Coran by Machasin, (Jakarta: INIS, 1997). Idem, *al-Fikr al-Islami: Qira'ah Islamiyyah*, (Beirut: Markaz al-Inma' al-Qawml, 1987). Idem, *ALU-Islam, al-Akhlaq wa al-Siyasah*, (Beirut: Markaz al-Inma' al-Qawmi, 1988). Idem, *Min Faysal al-Tafriqah ila Fasl al-Maqal*, (Beirut: Dar al-Saqi, 1993). Idem, *al-Fikr al-Islami: Naqd wa Ijtihad*, (Beirut: Dar al-S3ql, 1990). Boullata, Issa J., *Trends, and Issues in Contemporary Arab Thought*, (New York. SUNY, 1990). Ruslani, *Masyarakat Kitab dan Dialog Antaragama: Study atas Pemikiran Mohammad Arkoun*, (Yogyakarta: Bentang Budaya, 2000). 'Ali Harb, *Naqd al-Nass*, (Beirut: Markaz al-Thaqafi at-'Arabi, 1993). 'Abd al-Hadi 'Abd al-Rahman, *Sultat al-Nass: Qira'ah fi Tawdifi al-Nass al-Dini*, (Beirut: Markaz al-Thaqafi al-'Arabi, 1993). Suadi Sa'ad, "Islam Menghadapi Tantangan Modernitas: Pandangan Mohammed Arkoun," *Master's Thesis*. (Jakarta: IAIN Syarif hidayatullah, 1995). Yusup Rahman, "The hermeneutical theory of Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd: An Analytical Study of His Method of Interpreting the Qur'an," *PhD's Thesis*. (Montreal: McGill University, 2001). Johan Hendrik Meuleman, *Tradisi, Kemandirian, dan Metamodernisme: Memperbincangkan Pemikiran Mohammad Arkoun*, (Yogyakarta: Lkis, 1996). Leonard Binder, *Islamic Liberalism: A Critique of Development Ideologies*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988. Amin Abdullah, *Falsafah Kalam: Di Era Postmodernisme*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1997). 'Abd al-Rajak Hirmas, "Al-Qur'an al-Karim: wa Manahij al-Tahlil al-Khilabi, in the book of (*Hawlah Kuliyyah al-Shari'ah wa Al-Qanun wa al-Dirdsah al-Islamiyyah*, (Qatr: Jami'at Qatr, 2001).

by Rahayu S. Hidayat and *The Unthought In Contemporary Islamic Thought* discuss several topics, i.e. the theories, approaches, and methods, such as modern linguistic theory, deconstruction method and social analysis, to Islam as it is understood in the area of religious studies.

It is widely argued that these books discuss ideas that combine a critical review of modern studies devoted to early and contemporary periods of what is generally called "Islam" with the systematic deconstructions of the original texts. Here, the author generally states that it has to create methodological and epistemological options in order to conquer new territory not only to explore new fields of meaning, but also primarily to initiate new levels and types of understanding of many inherited issues which remain unexamined.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, his methods or approaches are *not written to be ready to use* (Abdullah, 1997) in one book. It is understood that all his ideas have been written separately in various books and articles, because his typicality of post-modernism style is sometimes a zigzag, marginalized from mainstream narrative, to "anarchist." There are many ways and approaches on how to understand Arkoun's "text" based on his style. In these books, the author discusses the epistemology and terminology of ideas, the so-called thinkable, unthinkable and unthought clearly and comprehensively in contemporary Islamic thought.

<sup>9</sup> Mohammed Arkoun, *The Unthought In Contemporary Islamic Thought*, (London: Saqi Books, 2002), p. 15.

It is interesting when Arkoun analyses Islam by using current Western methods, such as anthropological theory<sup>10</sup>, structural linguistics theory (propounded by a *genre* of French thinkers, especially Ferdinand De Saussure),<sup>11</sup> as the basic initial step or point of departure for a new critical understanding of Islamic heritage. It means that Arkoun applies **and** focuses the theories **on** his research, **and** especially the Qur'anic text, while observing the question; what is a text? For him, the text that (read: the **Qur'an**) has to be **read** as a transformation from oral discourse to written text, has three important aspects: 1) the **Qur'anic** discourse has become radical, changing to linguistics **and** semiotics issues; 2) the sacred character has been extended to the written text; *and* 3) the **increasing** role of written culture over oral culture.<sup>12</sup> Thus, he criticizes **and** deconstructs the established **Muslim** scholars' thought **in** understanding what Islamic heritage is.

**He** attempts to reconstruct a framework, commonly called "**paradigm**," that has a living dialogue **grounded** in common reference to particular creative events. Nevertheless, Arkoun never considers modernism as the contradictory source, even though it is from the "outsiders." According to **him**, modernism is described as ***I'irruption*** [an invasion] **that** has brought positive **and** negative effects to Muslim countries, especially **on their** way of **thinking**.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See Muhammad ' Arkun, (*Hawl al-Interfulujiya al-Diniyyah nahwa Islamiyat al-Tatbiqiyyah*, (Beirut: al-Fikr al-'Arabi al-Mu'asir 1980). For further reading information, see Michel Foucault's work "*The archeology of knowledge*," this book has been contributing to and inspiring Arkoun in understanding of his researches.

<sup>11</sup>is work is *Course in General Linguistics*.

<sup>12</sup> Mohammed Arkoun, "The Notion of Revelation," *Die Welt des Islami XXVIII*, (1988), p. 75.

<sup>13</sup> For further information, see Muhammad 'Arkun *Al-Islam wa al-Hadathah* (Beirut: Muwafiq, 1989). Suadi Sa'ad, 'Islam Menghadapi Tantangan Modernitas: Pandangan Mohammed Arkoun,' *Master's Thesis*. (Jakarta: IAIN Syarifhidayatullah, 1995).

Modernism has brought with it some obstacles, and so it is hard to accept it as a medium to *analyze* Islam as people argue that modernism is a kind of new form of colonialism. However, according to his view, the term 'modernism' is still debatable, whether it is an ideology (based on Western civilization) or knowledge. However, some items in modernism are very important to be read *and* meditated in order to be clearly recognized. Is it possible to accept modernism as a discourse? It means that the term 'modernism' can be observed by other perspectives such as Islam, in Hanafi's term, [*ru'yatul And min manzur at-Akhar*], but not observed by their own (Western) perspectives [*ru'yatul And min manzur al-And*].

As Arkoun is included in the post-modernism *genre* [*'aql ma ba'd al-haddthah*], he knows that modernism is incompatible with this, but he does not contradict modernism with post-modernism. Furthermore, he actually describes both of them as being related to one another. He states that post-modernism is continuity on modernism. Because of the weaknesses, limitations, and closeness to the Western culture or thought, he proposes a new term, "meta-modernism thought" [*'aql ma ward'a al-haddthah*].<sup>14</sup>

In addition, he maintains that the purpose of his research regarding any analysis is not to determine the "truthfulness or untruthfulness", but rather to deconstruct the social *imaginaire* which has been formed *and* structured by the phenomenon of circumstance. This is the basis of Arkoun's deconstruction theory in considering the social *imaginaire* as a field of study.

<sup>14</sup> Muhammad 'Arkfūn, "Muqaddimat al-Mu'allif" in *Min Faysal al-Tafriqah ila Fast al-Maqdl*, (Beirut: Dar al-Saqi, 1993). pp. XX-XXI. See also, Johan Hendrik Meuleman, "Islam dan Pasca-Modernisme Dalam Pemikiran Mohammed Arkoun," pp. 119-130 in *Tradisi, Kemandirian, dan Metamodernisme: Memperbincangkan Pemikiran Mohammad Arkoun*, (Yogyakarta: Lkis, 1996).

### **1.5. Research Methodology**

Library research methodology will be employed in this study. Both primary and secondary sources will be referred to in this research. The primary resources mean books or articles written by Arkoun, while secondary sources are what other commentators have written about Arkoun's thought. In other words, as a supportive source, the research will utilize the secondary sources and the writings of the scholars regarding the particular matter, which will be of significant contribution to the current study.

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of Arkoun's thought, a descriptive approach is used in the introductory part. The analytical exposition of the facts followed by a critical assessment will be mostly used to introduce Arkoun. The following questions are also examined in this research: Why his ideas are controversial? What are his methodologies and approaches? Why does he epistemologically criticize the established Muslim' thought in understanding Islam and the Qur'anic text? How do Indonesian scholars react to his ideas?

At the end, the researcher shall examine the proponents and opponents of Arkoun's view from among the scholars, especially Indonesian scholars, to develop an academic discourse of the topic.

## Chapter II

### Description and Classification of Indonesian Studies on Arkoun's Thought

The object of the present research is to describe and classify Indonesian studies on Arkoun's thought, which is currently booming in Indonesia. Since Arkoun's works are translated into Indonesian language, his method of interpreting the Qur'anic text has become a methodical and systematic trend in Qur'anic studies.

In this chapter, a detailed Indonesian scholar's studies on Arkoun's thought have been chosen and *divided* into sections in order to describe and classify their themes, perspectives, and methods. The primary aim of this qualitative and quantitative classification is to formulate the underlying philosophical basis of each level of study and to relate this basis to certain principles contained generally in Indonesian scholars' study of Arkoun's thought. It is also to give an analytical treatment of the following questions: what are the major distinguishing features of each type of the study? How epistemologically can these distinctions be categorized?

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In the classification scheme, this research attempts to apply to Indonesian studies on Arkoun's thought as related to issues of *kalam, fiqh, akhlaq, tasawwuf, tafsir, siydsah*, Islamic reason, and the Qur'anic text. The qualitative classification will deal with the methods, perspectives, or approaches used by Arkoun, i.e. dialogue, hermeneutics, deconstruction, archeology of religion, and linguistic issues. It is an analytical dealing with the understanding of certain issues. Descriptions of different levels of studies in this case will help to illustrate the main idea of this research.

## **2.1. Qualitative Classification**

Having discussed and identified the basis for a quantitative classification above, this classification will be presented in terms of perspectives, methods, and approaches.

The qualitative classification, which is used in this study, aims at a comprehensive understanding of an organized body of research that encompasses a discipline with its typical goals, basic premises, and objects of inquiry.

Therefore, as far as it is consistent and helping to illustrate the main theses presented in this study these classifications will be acceptable. The model of qualitative classification, which is presented in this study, is to focus on establishing and explaining its "philosophical" basis, such as epistemology and axiology. It is generally understood that a word of qualitative classification relates closely to the philosophical ideas.

This study of classification will describe in more details what Indonesian scholars have done in their research. It refers particularly to the kind of models when used in their respective researches.

### **2.1.1. Perspectives**

Etymologically, a perspective is a point of view. It means that classification is done on Indonesian studies of Arkoun's thought as a "proper" analysis of qualitative classification. For instance, Ruslani's work, *Masyarakat Kitab dan Dialog Agama: Studi Atas Pemikiran Mohammed Arkoun [AM al-Kitdb and Inter-religious Dialogue: A Study of Mohammed Arkoun's thought]*, is a model of Indonesian scholars'