



Hermeneutik: Jurnal Ilmu Al Qur'an dan Tafsir

ISSN 1907-7246 E-ISSN 2502-6402

Tersedia online di <https://journal.iainkudus.ac.id/index.php/Hermeneutik/index>

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21043/hermeneutik.v19i2.34385>

The Concept of *Mafhum al-Nash* in the Thought of Nashr Hamid Abu Zaid: A Comparative Analysis with the Literal Approach of Khawarij

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between the thought of Nashr Hamid Abu Zaid and the ideology of Khawarij, focusing on the analysis of the concept of "Mafhum al-Nashsh". As a progressive Muslim thinker, Abu Zaid offers a critical approach to textual understanding in Islam that emphasizes the importance of context and dynamic interpretation. On the other hand, Khawarij is known for its literal and radical approach to religious texts. By analyzing Abu Zaid's works, this article identifies the intersection and the fundamental differences between Abu Zaid's critical approach and the Khawarij's textual views. This study examines Abu Zaid's response to the Khawarij ideology and assesses the implications of this relationship for contemporary Islamic understanding and efforts to counter religious extremism. The research results are expected to make a significant contribution to understanding the dialectic between progressive and literal thought in Islamic discourse.

Keywords: Islamic Thought, Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, Khawarij.

Abstrak

Studi ini menyelidiki hubungan antara pemikiran Nashr Hamid Abu Zaid dan ideologi Khawarij, dengan penekanan pada analisis konsep "Mafhum al-Nashsh". Sebagai pemikir Muslim progresif, Abu Zaid menawarkan pendekatan kritis terhadap pemahaman tekstual dalam Islam yang menekankan pentingnya konteks dan interpretasi dinamis. Di sisi lain, Khawarij dikenal karena pendekatannya yang harfiah dan radikal terhadap teks-teks agama. Melalui analisis karya-karya Abu Zaid, artikel ini mengidentifikasi persimpangan serta perbedaan mendasar antara pendekatan kritis Abu Zaid dan pandangan tekstual Khawarij. Studi ini tidak hanya mengungkapkan bagaimana Abu Zaid menanggapi ideologi Khawarij, tetapi juga mengevaluasi implikasi dari hubungan ini terhadap pemahaman Islam kontemporer dan upaya untuk melawan ekstremisme agama. Hasil penelitian diharapkan dapat memberikan kontribusi yang signifikan dalam memahami dialektika antara pemikiran progresif dan harfiah dalam wacana Islam.

Kata Kunci: Pemikiran Islam, Nashr Hamid Abu Zaid, Khawarij.

Introduction

The need for the study of the Qur'an had been felt since the beginning of the spread of Islam, but it became increasingly important during the Abbasid period when Islam spread beyond the Arabs. During this period, Islam was followed not only by Arabs, but also by various peoples who spoke different languages and cultures. Therefore, the importance of understanding the Qur'an in the context of diverse languages and cultures has become very urgent. Manna' al-Qaththan states that before the period of tadwin (the official compilation of Islamic science), various works of tafsir appeared that were independent of the field of hadith. These interpretations interpret the Qur'an by considering the order of verses and letters as arranged in the mushaf. This shows that there is a systematic effort in studying the Qur'an, by trying to provide an interpretation that is appropriate to the context of the verses and letters contained in the mushaf, as well as paying attention to the historical and social context when these verses were revealed (Alfian, 2018).

Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd was an Egyptian thinker and academic known for his progressive thinking in Islamic studies. Since the 1970s, his works have sparked fierce debate in the Islamic world. Many appreciated his efforts in promoting enlightenment and renewal in the understanding of Islam. Abu Zayd emphasized the importance of a critical and contextual approach in interpreting religious texts, including the Qur'an, with the aim of adapting these teachings to the development of the times and the needs of contemporary society (Nur Muhammad & Turmudzi, et al., 2022).

However, on the other hand, Abu Zayd's works are considered controversial and offensive by conservatives. They considered his thinking to be a form of blasphemy against Islam and an indication of apostasy. In 1995, a court in Egypt issued a ruling stating that his thinking had deviated from the teachings of Islam, so he was disbelieved. Consequently, Nashr Abu Zayd was forcibly separated from his wife, Dr. Ibtihal Yunis, a professor of French and Comparative Literature at Cairo University (Suryani, 2021).

Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd argued that the Qur'an is a cultural product. According to him, the documents of the Qur'an were created in reality and culture for more than 20 years. On the other hand, the Qur'an is also a producer of culture, because it can also

change the culture in a civilization (*Mintij Li al-Thaqafah*). The Qur'an is a hegemonic document and is a reference for other documents (Munir & Am, 2025).

According to Nasr Hamid, culture and reality cannot be separated from the influence of language. Therefore, the Qur'an is also a linguistic text (*nash lughawi*). The combination of reality, culture, and language makes the Qur'an a historical document as well as a document of humanity. Although the Qur'an comes from God, it exists in a certain space and time so it is human. His humanity began when the Prophet conveyed this revelation to his companions. Nasr Hamid said:

"Since the first revelation of the document, since it was revealed and recited by the Prophet, it has changed from a divine document (Nash Dewa) to a human concept or document (Nash Insani) because it has changed" from Tanzil to Takwil. Muhammad's understanding of scripture was the initial stage in the interaction between scripture and the human mind." (Setiawan, 2025)

Abu Zayd also referred to Islamic civilization as a textual civilization. This means that the development of systems and patterns of human relations in the Islamic world is based on texts that are the foundation and fundamental center. In this case, texts that clash with the context lead to the emergence of a certain civilization. The text he is referring to here is of course the Quran (Suryani, 2021).

According to him, the text of the Qur'an consists of two stages. In the first stage, the Qur'an evolved and was structurally adapted to the cultural system from which it was revealed. One of the aspects is the linguistic aspect. In order for the Qur'an to be understood by its target audience, namely the Arab community, it must be built on the structure of Arab culture which has a fundamental aspect as a language. More specifically, according to Adnan Amar, the Qur'an used several commercial terms that became the basis of the social structure of the people of Mecca and Medina at that time. This stage is called the period of emergence (*Malhalla al-Tasakkul*), and the text of the Qur'an is described as a product of culture (Mutiullah, 2023b).

In the second stage, the texts of the Qur'an shaped and reconstructed their cultural systems. For example, in the context of linguistics. The language system developed by the Qur'an differs from the mother tongue (Arabic before the Qur'an) and ultimately influences the future Arabic system. At the same time, Islamic scholars and Muslims

studied the meaning and interpretation of the Qur'an, which ultimately influenced the relational patterns and cultural structures around the Qur'an. This stage is called the formative stage (*Malhalla al-Tashkil*) (Fathurrosyid, 2018).

Language has a very significant influence on the development of culture and reality. Therefore, Abu Zayd called for the study of the text of the Qur'an using a linguistic and literary approach that pays attention to cultural and historical aspects. As a result, Abu Zayd here decralizes his view of the Qur'an, positioning it as a cultural product and juxtaposing it with other ordinary human texts.

As a result, according to Abu Zayd, the Qur'an can be read and interpreted by anyone, both Muslims and non-Muslims, and can be contributed to the study of the Qur'an. At this point, he was considered apostate by many Islamic scholars. Abu Zayd's thinking about the Qur'an as a cultural product was actually a continuation of the idea of his teacher Amin al-Kuri who viewed the Qur'an as a book of literature. That is, we can say that his thoughts are not original from him. When connected with classical times, his thinking is similar to the controversy of Mu'tazilah who questioned the existence of the Qur'an.

Hamka Hasan, in his introduction to the translation, expresses an interesting view of Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd. Hasan states that many people with liberal views may not believe that Nashr, with his reformative thinking, actually had a very deep background in Islamic religious studies. By the age of eight, Nashr had already memorized the Qur'an, a fact that surprised many who knew him only as a progressive thinker. According to Hasan, this ignorance occurs because the discourse about Abu Zayd, as well as other contemporary figures, still holds a lot of "mystery" among scholars of reformist figures. This skeptical and often erroneous attitude arises because the knowledge they have about them comes from incomplete studies of others, so the information received becomes imperfect (Sofyan, 2022).

The Khawarij, which was founded in the 7th century, is one of the most radical groups in Islamic history. They are known for violence and extremism in various aspects of life. Their thoughts on religion and politics have been the subject of a long debate. Therefore, the correlation of Nashr Hamid's thought with Khawarij's ideology can provide a clearer picture of how he responded to such radical ideology.

Thus, this study aims to find out how Nashr Hamid's thoughts in his work Mafhum al-Nashsh are related to the ideology of Khawarij. Thus, this study is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of Nashr Hamid's thought and how he responded to radical ideologies in Islam.

Theoretical Studies

This research uses hermeneutic theory as the main foundation in understanding the dialectic of Nashr Hamid Abu Zaid thought and Khawarij ideology. Hermeneutics is a method of understanding texts that considers historical, cultural, and linguistic aspects, as developed by Gadamer (1975) through the concept of "fusion of horizons" which states that understanding occurs when the horizon of the text meets the horizon of the reader. Abu Zaid applies a contextual hermeneutic approach through the concept of *Mafhum al-Nashsh*, in which the Qur'an is understood as a cultural product that adapts to the 7th-century Arab cultural structure (tasakkul stage) while also forming a new cultural system (tashkil stage), using Lotman's semiotic communication model that analyzes text as a sign system. In contrast, Khawarij ideology bases their understanding on a literalist approach that understands religious texts literally without considering the historical context. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) explains that radical groups such as Khawarij form an exclusive identity with extensive takfir practices, basing their ideology on the concept of hakimiyyah (the rule of law of Allah) with the motto "*The Lillah Island Hukma*".

The theoretical framework of this research integrates the critical discourse theory of Foucault (1972) which dismantles the power relations in the production of religious knowledge, Armstrong's (2000) theory of extremism which identifies fundamentalism as a defensive response to modernity, and the perspectives of modernism and Islamic post-modernism. Ricoeur (1976) developed a dialectical theory between the "world of text" and the "world of the reader", in which understanding occurs through the dynamic interaction of the two. The Islamic post-modernism that Abu Zaid represents adopts a post-structuralist methodology that emphasizes the plurality of interpretations, in contrast to Islamic modernism (Muhammad Abduh, Fazlur Rahman) which reconciles Islamic teachings with modern values. This study uses comparative analysis to identify fundamental similarities and differences between Abu Zaid's critical approach and

Khawarij's textual views, as well as to evaluate their implications for contemporary Islamic understanding and efforts to counter religious extremism.

Method

A theoretical research method based on qualitative evidence. This method is an approach developed in the 1960s by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (Oktaria et al., 2023). This method focuses on human interaction and seeks to understand the way people think when interpreting text language and group behavior. The purpose of this method is to help the individual understand what they are interpreting (Fitri & Febrianti, 2018).

Grounded theory is a type of qualitative method that performs analysis without using numbers. This method is an inductive method that seeks to test existing theories. The grounded theory (GT) method is a qualitative method for the development of inductive theory. Here are the steps to use the *Grounded Theory*; (Ayu & Budiasih, 2013)

1. Problem formulation stage: Define the problem and gather information about the focus you want to describe.
2. Stage of use of theoretical studies: Read and analyze existing theories about the phenomenon.
3. Data collection and sampling stage: Collect data through interviews, observations, recordings, or a combination of these methods.
4. Data analysis stage: Forming categories (usually called themes) of the data obtained, and identifying the relationships between those categories in the context and the experimental process.
5. The stage of summarizing or writing a report, the first step is to create an inductive theory that explains the phenomenon by identifying the key elements of the phenomenon. It involves an in-depth analysis of the data that has been collected to identify emerging patterns and trends. After that, the key elements are categorized and the relationships between the elements are explained.

Grounded theory is a qualitative research approach that integrates theory and data, not just to confirm a hypothesis, but to develop a new understanding of the

phenomenon being studied. This method is relevant in both qualitative and quantitative research, with a primary focus on evaluating the impact of social behavior.

Results

About Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid and the Hermeneutics of the Quran

Nashr Hamid Abu Zaid (1943-2010) was a controversial Egyptian Muslim intellectual, known for his critical hermeneutic approach to the Qur'an. Its core thinking centers on the concept of the Qur'an as a "cultural product" (*muntaj al-thaqafi*) that must be understood in a linguistic, historical, and social context. Abu Zaid emphasized that the text of the Qur'an, although it came from God, has become a "human text" (*nash insani*) since it was received by the Prophet Muhammad and communicated to the Arab people in the 7th century. He uses linguistic and hermeneutic approaches to interpret the Qur'an contextually and progressively, rejecting literal readings and encouraging interpretations that take into account the times. This view sparked great controversy – he was disloyal by an Egyptian court in 1995 and forced to divorce his wife, even though he himself had been a memorizer of the Qur'an since the age of eight with a strong Islamic educational background.

Nasr Hamid's thought began when he followed the thoughts of the Russian semiotist Juri M. Lotman, Abu Zaid developed a theoretical model of communication in which the Qur'an conveyed the message (*Stuart Stuart*) and developed as signs that are both verbal and nonverbal, describing the communication relationship between the sender (*Mursil*) and the recipient (*Mustaqbal*) it is based on a code (*Shifra*) or language systems. Abu Zaid, successfully translated two works *Lotman* into Arabic, for which the work adheres to the concept of Russian semiotic texts, arguing that art is a special means of communication, a language composed in a certain way (Mufid et al., 2023).

Furthermore, Nasr Hamid wrote in his book *Iskalliyyat al-Qira'ah wa aliyat at-takwil* (Textual Interpretation Problems and Hermeneutic Mechanisms) in it there is an intention that, there is no one objective reading unit (everything is subjective and varies from reader to reader). In this way, Abu Zaid consciously tried to reuse the essence of the

meaning contained in the Qur'an with original instructions so that it would immediately develop and advance according to the spirit of the times (Fikri Hamdani, 2013).

Based on the above concept, Nasr Hamid finally explained his arguments related to the Quran in a very contradictory manner. He said that if the text of the Qur'an was revealed to the prophet Muhammad, then the text of the Qur'an is the same as other texts. The "Cultural Product" referred to by Nasr Hamid is the Quran which is present in the midst of a cultured society, not a society without culture.

The steps taken by Nasr Hamid aim to link the study of the Qur'an with the study of literature and establish an "objective" understanding of Islam (*al-Mahm al-Mawdui li al-Islam*), with the aim of avoiding political and ideological tendencies. Nasr Hamid is aware and acknowledges that there are groups that use Islam ideologically for political and economic purposes. In general, Nasr Hamid's hermeneutic approach involves two aspects. The first goal is to find basic meaning textually and place it in a social and historical context. The second objective is to explain the current social and cultural framework as well as the practical objectives that influence and guide interpretation. However, it should be noted that the methodology using empirical and linguistic references introduced by Nasr Hamid is not a new method, but a development of the method that has been carried out previously by his teacher, namely Amin Al-Khuli (Habibur Rahman, n.d.).

Abu Zayd considers the interpretation of religious texts such as the Qur'an and the hadith of the Prophet as key elements in religious discussions to convey ideas and views. He emphasized that correct interpretation, i.e. one that produces a deep understanding of the text, must take into account a wide range of contexts, including historical, social, cultural, and linguistic (Zaid, 2003, p. 111). Abu Zayd highlighted that religious texts cannot be separated from the cultural context in which they appear. Although they are thought to be of divine origin, it is important to recognize that these texts remain linguistic constructs, with all the associated linguistic implications. Religious texts are tied to historical and social contexts, which means that they have a relationship to space and time in historical and sociological perspectives. In other words, religious texts are in a specific context and are influenced by cultural, historical, and social factors that existed at the time the text was handed down. Abu Zayd rejects the view that religious

texts have a pre-existence outside the category of language, which would place them outside the epistemological and procedural apparatus we use to study other texts. If we consider religious texts to be beyond the reach of linguistic and contextual analysis, we cannot produce a scientific discourse on them. This kind of approach will take us into the realm of superstition and myth, where religious texts are considered impossible to analyze or understand rationally and scientifically (Reza, 2019).

In the face of the complexity of the context of the formation of the text and its interpretation process, it is important to consider several key contexts. Although the term "context" refers to a single entity, it is diverse in its manifestations. Texts, especially in scientific contexts, have various forms that become more complex when we consider cultural texts, which have meaning in the semiotic realm. In the context of religious texts, understanding the differences between epistemological and ideological aspects is key to avoiding biased and unobjective interpretations. By separating the general consciousness of society (epistemology) and the interests of a particular group (ideology), we can get closer to the original meaning of the text and how it should be understood. The existence of God's holy words in the context of human language requires us to understand the various levels of context that affect their interpretation. By distinguishing between epistemological and ideological aspects, we can better understand how meaning is produced and received, and avoid biased interpretations. This approach allows us to understand religious texts more objectively and in a more relevant way in the modern context (Safroodin, 2021).

Understanding religious texts, including the Qur'an, outside the context of Arab culture and knowledge in the 7th century AD is a complex challenge. Language, as a means of conveying the message of religious texts, plays a key role in responding to this. However, it is important to remember that language is not an empty entity or just a neutral means of communication. Each text has an additional linguistic context, or secondary medium, that operates within a broader language system. Although secondary language in religious texts plays an important role in conveying religious meanings, understanding religious texts as a whole also requires an understanding of the cultural context and knowledge of the time and place in which they were revealed. Only with such a holistic approach can we approach a comprehensive understanding of religious texts and the meanings they contain (Mujahidin, 2023).

Khawarij Ideology: Sect of Extremism

Khawarij is one of the schools in Islam that has a long history, starting from the early days of the caliphate. The seeds of the emergence of the Khawarij were already seen in the time of the Prophet S.A.W., although formally they only emerged as an organized group during the caliphate of Ali bin Abi Talib RA. The Khawarij school is known for its extreme and radical ideological views. They emerged as a reaction to the political and religious situation of the time. One of the main principles of the Khawarij is the rejection of authority that they consider incompatible with the teachings of pure Islam. They are very strict in upholding what they believe to be the law of Allah, even against fellow Muslims who disagree with them.

During the caliphate of Ali bin Abi Talib RA, Khawarij became a significant force and often caused unrest among Muslims. They initially supported Ali but later broke away after dissatisfaction with the outcome of the arbitration in the Battle of Siffin between Ali and Muawiyah. Khawarij considered arbitration to be an unlawful act and a violation of Allah's commands. They then adopted the motto "There is no law but the law of God" (لَا حُكْمَ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ), which is one of the hallmarks of their ideology (Anshori Yani, 2009).

Although many consider that the Khawarij no longer formally exist, they left behind a legacy in the form of a basic ideological framework that became the basis for the emergence of extremist movements among Muslims. This framework became the foundation for various radical groups in spreading their teachings. Despite inheriting only radical thinking, its impact remains very dangerous for the Muslim community. Along with the times, the pattern of group movements that inherited Khawarij's thought also underwent a transformation from conventional methods to more modern and practical methods. The use of social media such as WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook is the main means for these extremist groups to spread hatred, attack dissenters, and hostile those who disagree. Takfir, i.e. disbelieving others who are not on the same path, is also often practiced by these groups.

The modern Khawarij group uses social media as a tool to spread their radical doctrines, including insulting and verbally attacking individuals with different political views. Especially during the political period, this activity is increasing. Although the

government has passed the Electronic Information and Transactions Act (ITE Law) to regulate online behavior, the number of accounts involved in extremism and the spread of fake news has led to information technology experts and law enforcement having to work hard to suppress Khawarij propaganda on social media platforms (Zuhri, 2022). The main characteristics of the theological interpretation that underpinned the movements of both early Islam and modern Khawarij can be summarized into three important points.

1. Puritan Islam: Adhering to the concept of hakimiyyah (the sovereignty of Allah's law). They consider anyone who does not submit to God's law to be an infidels, and such people are obligated to be fought regardless of age or gender.
2. Religious Fanaticism: A literal textual interpretation of the Qur'an. They consider all religious practices that do not find their basis in the Qur'an as bid'ah dlalalah (misleading bid'ah).
3. Politics of the Caliphate: A political view oriented towards the establishment of the caliphate system.

Both the early Islamic Khawarij and the modern Khawarij both had an exclusive Islamic view and easily disbelieved people outside their group. This view is very dangerous because it triggers division and violence in Muslims (Ahmad Sudi Pratikno, 2019, p. 32).

Discussion

Between Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid And Khawarij Ideology

Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid's thoughts did not directly influence Khawarij's ideology. Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid was a controversial Islamic intellectual known for his criticism of tradition and interpretation of sacred texts. His thoughts have inspired some Muslim scholars in Islamic studies, but they are not directly related to the ideology of Khawarij.

The Khawarij are a group of radicals that emerged in the early days of Islam and are known for their cruelty towards people they consider incompatible with the teachings of Islam. They have a very radical ideology and reject traditions and interpretations of sacred texts that are considered incompatible with human values. In several works, Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid did criticize the Sufism tradition that fell into mysticism and cultism, as

well as using literary criticism to understand sacred texts in historical and social contexts. However, this does not mean that his thinking directly influenced the ideology of Khawarij, which had more radical goals and methods of interpretation that were not based on scientific knowledge (Anshori Yani, 2009, p. 279).

Based on the above data, the author tries to explain the thinking of Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid and the ideology of Khawarij which have some similarities and differences in their thinking.

Equations:

1. Criticism of tradition: Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid and Khawarij criticized tradition and interpretation of sacred texts that were considered incompatible with the values of humanity and justice. Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid attacked the Sufism tradition that fell into mysticism and cult, while Khawarij was very radical in accessing and interpreting sacred texts.
2. Use of literary criticism: Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid is known for his radical literary criticism, which was also applied by the Khawarij in interpreting sacred texts. This criticism aims to understand sacred texts in a historical and social context, as well as to eliminate interpretations that are incompatible with human values.
3. Influence on Muslim scholars: Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid has inspired several Muslim scholars in Islamic studies. They use literary criticism and scientific knowledge to understand sacred texts and criticize traditions that are considered incompatible with human values. However, this does not mean that his thinking directly influenced the ideology of Khawarij, which had more radical goals and methods of interpretation that were not based on scientific knowledge.

Differences:

1. Objective: Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid seeks to understand the sacred text by looking at the context in which the Prophet received the revelation, while Khawarij has a more radical goal, which is to destroy the traditions and interpretations of sacred texts that are considered incompatible with human values.

2. Interpretation method: Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid uses an interpretation method based on scientific knowledge and contextual awareness, while Khawarij has a more radical interpretation method and is not based on scientific knowledge.
3. Historical context: Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid understands sacred texts in historical and social contexts. Khawarij also understood sacred texts in a historical context, but with a more radical goal, namely to destroy traditions and interpretations of sacred texts that were considered incompatible with human values.
4. Use of scientific knowledge: Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid uses scientific knowledge and contextual awareness to understand sacred texts. Khawarij does not use scientific knowledge and contextual awareness in the interpretation of sacred texts, but rather focuses on interpretations that are radical and not based on scientific knowledge.
5. Influence on Islamic studies: Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid has inspired several Muslim scholars in Islamic studies. They use literary criticism and scientific knowledge to understand sacred texts and criticize traditions that are considered incompatible with human values. However, this does not mean that his thinking directly influenced the ideology of Khawarij, which had more radical goals and methods of interpretation that were not based on scientific knowledge.
6. Differences in approach: Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid uses a more moderate approach and is based on scientific knowledge, while Khawarij has a more radical approach and is not based on scientific knowledge. This difference shows that Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid's thinking did not directly influence the ideology of Khawarij.

In several works, Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid did criticize the Sufism tradition that fell into mysticism and cultism, as well as using literary criticism to understand sacred texts in historical and social contexts. However, this does not mean that his thinking directly influenced the ideology of Khawarij, which had more radical goals and methods of interpretation that were not based on scientific knowledge. In the synthesis, Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid and Khawarij have similarities in the criticism of tradition and the use of literary criticism, but have differences in the purpose and method of interpretation. Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid seeks to understand the sacred text by looking at the context of the Prophet and using interpretation methods based on scientific knowledge, while Khawarij has more

radical goals and interpretation methods that are not based on scientific knowledge (Victress, 2023).

Examples of the Application of Mafhum al-Nash in the Interpretation of Qur'an Verses

The difference in approach between Abu Zaid and Khawarij can be seen concretely in the interpretation of QS. Al-An'am [6]: 57, "إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ" (The decision belongs only to Allah). Khawarij understood this verse literally with the motto "La hukma illa lillah" and rejected all forms of human arbitration, even disbelieving Ali bin Abi Talib when he received tahkim in the Battle of Siffin (Anshori Yani, 2009). Instead, Abu Zaid analyzes this verse by considering the socio-political context of 7th-century Arabia which had a system of tribal arbitration. According to him, this verse criticizes the authority of the chief of the jahiliyyah tribe and affirms the supremacy of divine principles, but does not deny the role of human reason in ijtihad based on the values of the Qur'an (Zaid, 2003). This difference shows how Abu Zaid's contextual approach resulted in a more flexible and humanist interpretation than Khawarij's literalism.

Another example can be seen in the interpretation of QS. An-Nisa [4]: 48 about sins that Allah does not forgive. Khawarij expands the concept of shirk to include every major sin, so that the perpetrator of a major sin is considered to be out of Islam and his blood is lawful to be killed (Ahmad Sudi Pratikno, 2019). This extreme view leads to the practice of mass takfir against fellow Muslims who are considered to have committed a great sin. Abu Zaid, with his hermeneutic approach, will criticize this literal reading and emphasize the importance of understanding the verse in a broader theological context, where Allah has the will to forgive sins other than shirk, as well as considering the concepts of repentance and divine mercy (Subchi, 2020). Through the concept of mafhum al-nash, Abu Zaid shows that texts cannot be understood in isolation from the more comprehensive system of meaning and the humanitarian context that surrounds it.

In the context of verses about jihad, for example, QS. At-Taubah [9]:5, "فَاَقْتُلُوا" (kill the polytheists), Khawarij applied this order universally without considering the historical context of the Battle of Badr and the conditions of the Muslims' defensive

warfare at that time (Zulkarnaen, 2020). They use this verse to justify violence against anyone considered polytheistic or infidel, including Muslims of different views. Abu Zaid, through linguistic and historical analysis, explains that this verse descends in the specific context of the wars of the Prophet's time and has contextual limitations that must be considered, including other verses on peace and tolerance (Mutiullah, 2023a). This approach shows how mafhum al-nash Abu Zaid integrates intertextual analysis, historical context, and the principles of Islamic humanism to produce an interpretation that is far from the violent justification perpetrated by the Khawarij ideology.

Conceptual Analysis of Mafhum Al-Nash on the Thought of Nashr Hamid Abu Zaid and the Ideology of Khawarij in Interpreting the Quran

The thought of Nashr Hamid Abu Zaid and the ideology of Khawarij are at two opposite poles in the spectrum of Islamic thought. Abu Zaid represents a progressive-contextual approach that emphasizes the dynamism of interpretation, the use of reason, and historical relevance in understanding sacred texts. He acknowledges the pluralism of interpretation and subjectivity of the reading of the text, emphasizing the importance of the 7th-century Arab cultural context in understanding the Qur'an as a "cultural product" that later became a "cultural producer". Rather, Khawarij represents a rigid and exclusive literal fundamentalism, rejects the use of reason that goes beyond the literal understanding of the text, and considers the text to be universal in nature that must be applied literally without consideration of the historical-social context. This fundamental difference creates two conflicting paradigms in understanding and practicing Islam.

Although both are equally critical of tradition and focus on the text of the Qur'an, their goals and methods are very different. Abu Zaid's critique aims to advance the understanding of Islam through intellectual enlightenment, using modern science-based hermeneutics such as linguistics and semiotics to adapt Islamic teachings to contemporary needs. He emphasized the importance of understanding the Qur'an in the context of communication between the sender (Mursil), the message (risala), and the receiver (Mustaqbal) which is based on a certain language system. Meanwhile, Khawarij's criticism aims to purify Islam through the literal application of Allah's law with the

concept of hakimiyyah, often leading to extremism and violence against dissenting groups. Abu Zaid offered tolerance and intellectual openness, while Khawarij displayed exclusivism and takfir practices that endangered the cohesion of Muslims.

The similarity between the two lies in the critical attitude towards the interpretation of texts that are considered incompatible with the values of humanity and justice, albeit in different directions. Both also have a significant impact on contemporary Islamic discourse. Abu Zaid criticized the Sufist tradition for falling into excessive mysticism and an interpretive approach that ignored the historical context, while Khawarij criticized religious practices that were considered heretical and incompatible with the literal understanding of the Qur'an. However, Abu Zaid uses literary criticism and scholarly approaches to produce objective and contextual understandings, while Khawarij uses criticism to justify an exclusivity and violence against those deemed to deviate from the pure teachings of Islam.

Another fundamental difference lies in their view of the position of the text and its relationship to social reality. Abu Zaid viewed the Qur'an through two stages: firstly as a cultural product adapted to the Arab cultural structure when it was revealed (*marhala al-tasakkul*), and second as a cultural former that reconstructs the cultural system of society (*marhala al-tashkil*). This view emphasizes that texts cannot be separated from linguistic, historical, and social contexts, so interpretation must consider the different layers of those contexts. On the other hand, Khawarij views the text as an absolute entity that stands alone outside of any context, demanding literal application without considering the development of the times, social conditions, or different cultural contexts.

This dialectical study shows that Abu Zaid did not directly influence the ideology of Khawarij, in fact his thought can be understood as the antithesis of Khawarij's radicalism. Abu Zaid's contribution lies in providing an intellectual alternative to countering literal-radical thinking by offering a contextual, rational, and humanist hermeneutic framework. Ironically, both approaches are equally controversial in Islamic discourse: Abu Zaid was accused of undermining the sanctity of the text and even outlawed by an Egyptian court in 1995, while Khawarij was accused of undermining the essence of Islamic humanism through violence and takfir. This dialectical understanding between progressive and literal thought is important to develop a moderate Islamic

discourse that can counter extremism while maintaining the relevance of Islamic teachings in the contemporary era, showing that contextual and scientific approaches can be a solution to face the challenge of literal interpretation that leads to radicalism.

Conclusion

This study shows that the thought of Nashr Hamid Abu Zaid and the ideology of Khawarij represent two opposite poles in the interpretation of Islamic texts, progressive-contextual versus literal-radical that do not directly influence each other but are in direct contradiction. Abu Zaid offers a hermeneutic approach based on linguistics and historical-social context as an antithesis to the radical literalism of Khawarij, providing a rational, humanist, and tolerant intellectual framework to counter extremism characterized by takfir and violence. Although both were equally critical of tradition, fundamental differences in purpose, methods, and views on texts created two opposing paradigms: Abu Zaid sought to modernize the understanding of Islam by emphasizing the dynamism of interpretation and pluralism, while Khawarij implemented Islamic purification through the literal application of Allah's exclusive law. This dialectical understanding makes an important contribution to the development of moderate Islamic discourse that is able to maintain the relevance of Islamic teachings in the contemporary era, fight radicalism without losing its spiritual essence, and open up space for a critical and contextual approach in the study of the Qur'an that respects the diversity of interpretations and scientific developments.

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