Factors Influencing Muhammad Arkoun's Thinking

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Abstract. This paper aims to analyze the thoughts of an Islamic figure, namely Muhammad Arkoun, starting from how the biography of Muhammad Arkoun; and what factors influenced his thinking, works, and views. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method. This research is a research library. Data collection was obtained, retrieved, analyzed, and cited from various sources, such as books or research results, documents, and journals relevant to this research. The results and discussion in this study are Mohammad Arkoun was born on February 1, 1928, in Al-Jazair. Is a mountainous area inhabited by Berbers, precisely in Taourirt-Mimoun in eastern Algiers. Several factors that can be considered to have influenced Muhammad Arkoun thinking were included in the field of theology: first, social factors, second, political factors; and third, cultural factors. The influential figures include Paul Ricoeur, Ferdinand de Saussure, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault.

Keywords: Muhammad Arkoun, Islamic figure, thought.

1 Introduction

The aftermath of the French revolution and the coming of Bonaparte to Egypt opened new horizons in Arab thought [1]. One of the effects is the desire of Arab thinkers to revive the traditions of the Arab world through several channels. The path taken is, *First,* through editing (tahqiq) of classical Muslim philosophical books. *Second, it* introduces Western philosophical thought by translating the works of Western philosophers into Arabic. *Third,* write about philosophical issues that connect with contemporary realities on existing philosophical issues [2].

The development of science will impact contemporary scientists and thinkers [1]. It is inseparable from the figure of a contemporary Islamic thinker who can be said to be phenomenal for his ijtihad, namely Mohammed Arkoun, in several writings and several scientific journals as well as his essays and his colleagues in order to dig back into Islamic thought which is considered old-fashioned and offers the methods used. Arkoun tries to deconstruct the perspective of Islamic thought, which is considered sacred and established. Through social sciences and humanities, Arkoun seeks to rebuild the pluralism of thought used by the West in modern times. Arkoun tries to apply Foucault's thinking and Derrida's deconstruction in reinterpreting the Koran. So, the process of deconstruction of new Islamic thought appears to be influenced by the science of philosophy used in the 20th century AD.

Arkoun sees that the use of methods from the West does not threaten Islamic society today but is a new way to interpret the Koran more deeply and explain why Islamic thought is currently

experiencing a crisis. Therefore, Arkoun regretted that the development of science at this time was not used and was not known by the Islamic community. Even some Western Islamologists do not use it in Islamic studies [3].

Today's Islamic society is expected to reflect, appreciate, and even reconstruct the tradition of Islamic thought in dealing with phenomena [4]. So, this paper will describe the life and context that influenced Muhammad Arkoun's thoughts.

2 Methods

Scientific research is largely determined by the validity of the data and methods used in the research. The research approach used is through a descriptive qualitative approach. This research is library research; this data collection method is a secondary data collection technique where the data obtained is taken, analyzed, and quoted from various sources through scientific books or research results, documents, journals, articles, letters, news, and other documents relevant to this research. In this study, the historical method is used (historical research).

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 Mohammed Arkoun: A Biographic Sketch

Mohammad Arkoun was born on February 1, 1928, in Al-Jazair [5]. It is a mountainous area inhabited by Berbers, precisely in Tourirt-Mimoun in eastern Algiers [6]. He comes from a simple family, even from lower social circles. In the course of his life and thoughts, Arkoun knows various cultures and traditions that exist in society. From his childhood, Arkoun knew the three languages he used in his daily life. Kabilian, French, and Arabic are used at certain times, and Arabic is used in religious communication and worship activities. French is used in government administrative activities, and Kabilian is used in everyday language. So, the three languages appear to represent their respective traditions and cultures and even influence their thinking. The Kabilian language is only used as an everyday language that does not recognize written language; it has traces of a tradition preserved for thousands of years, which explains the existing socio-economic life. Arabic has an influence on the local languages used in the Middle East and the teachings of Islam. French influenced the government system and was one of the languages that taught Western science, which developed in previous centuries. Therefore, it is undeniable that language has an important role in the development of Mohammed Arkoun's thought [7].

Arkoun is also classified as one of the various figures who are concerned with the history of Islamic thought through postmodernist approaches as a tool for his analyses [8]. In the mid-20th century, Muhammed Arkoun was preoccupied with ways of thinking in modern and contemporary Arabic thought, especially regarding the tension between ideology and criticism. This is based on the development of Western science, which can explain sacred texts. Arkoun, throughout his career, has, placed Islam and his studies in a comparative perspective on religion, including Islam, Judaism, and Christianity [9]. According to Hamidulloh Ibda, Arkoun only wanted to explain that Western civilization is no better than Eastern civilization. Instead, contextualization and criticism of Western and Islamic thought emerged from Arkoun's ideas,

which were too orthodox, rigid, and linear because they did not see social reality. Arkoun formulates a more moderate Islamic humanism between Western ideas and orthodox Islam [10].

Mohammed Arkoun's secondary education began in Oran, an area quite far from his native Kabilia. In 1950-1954, he continued his education at the University of Algeria, majoring in Arabic Language and Literature while working as an Arabic teacher in a school on the outskirts of Al-Jazair. In 1954-1962, when there was a war for the liberation of Al-Jazair, Arkoun continued his education in Paris. Then, he also began to settle in France. During his stay in France, Arkoun increasingly studied Arabic and Islamic thought. So 1961, Arkoun became a permanent lecturer at the Sorbonne, Paris. Then, in 1969, he received a Doctorate degree in literature through his dissertation entitled "Humanism in Ibn Miskawaih's Ethical Thoughts "[3].

During his stay and study in France, Mohammed Arkoun began to influence his thinking about Islam beyond the influence of everyday language, where he began to study philosophy, Islamology, linguistics, social sciences, and Western Humanities. These influences can be seen in his various works. As for Western figures who are sources of scientific references, among others, Michel Foucault, Paul Ricoeur, and Jacques Derrida. Jack Goody and Pierre Bourdieu are references in the field of anthropology. Ferdinand de Saussure in language, Roland Barthes in semiotics, and Northop Frye in literature. The influence of Western thought is the basis for thinking about how Islamic society should develop today. It was also in France that Arkoun became a professor of language and history of Islamic thought at the Sorbonne University [11].

Apart from being a lecturer at the Sorbonne, Arkoun also hosted lectures at several universities, including the University of Lyon in 1970 and the University of Amsterdam in 1973 as a visiting professor. Apart from the University, Arkoun also gave several lectures outside of France, especially in Algeria. Apart from being a guest lecturer, he was also frequently summoned and interviewed among the political parties in his country after the political openness occurred in 1988-1992. From this activity, Arkoun does not participate in practical politics. He has also served as director of a scientific journal on Islamic studies called Arabica. He was also made chevalier de la legion d'honneur and held several official posts in France, such as the National Committee for Ethics in Science and Medicine, and was a member of the National Assembly for AIDS. During his stay in France, he often made harmonious relations with several minority Muslim groups around his residence. He follows the problems faced by these minorities, who mostly work as laborers in dealing with the majority of Westerners who use modern industry.

Most of Arkoun's works on Islamic thought are published in French. There are several reasons for this, including the fact that he has lived in France since he was a student until he became a permanent lecturer at the Sorbonne. Some have questioned why the work was not written in Arabic. Arabic is only learned at the secondary education level. The next reason is that he needs to get the terms that are in accordance with his thoughts, especially regarding deconstruction history, discourse criticism, and critical epistemology. However, in his struggle for Islamic thought, he has published several works written in Arabic and several works in English based on his many visits to England and America [3].

Arkoun, in several of his works tries to connect the rationalism of Western knowledge, the attitude of the Orientalists, and Muslim society with social ideals. This effort received several unfavorable responses from Islamic thinkers. Meuleman explained that apart from (theologians, anthropologists, and philosophers) in France, Arkoun worked in an isolated form. Western Orientalists see that Arkoun's work is only limited to certain papers or chapters that differ from

the approach and methodology used by Orientalists. Not only was he ostracized from his residence, but Arkoun was also viewed negatively by Muslims and even called an "infidel," including Muhammad Barisy from Morocco, Nu'man Abd Razzaq from Saudi Arabia, and so on. This figure's view specifically criticized Arkoun's writing, which was stated not to meet the standards of scientific writing.

Several of Arkoun's essays were introduced to Indonesia in 1989. Arkoun visited Indonesia in 1990 and 1992 for seminars, public lectures, and several discussions on ideas. In 1990, Arkoun became a speaker in Yogyakarta at the "Contemporary Expression of Islam in Building" seminar. In 1992, he gave a public lecture at the Postgraduate Program of UIN Sunan Kalijaga. The use of Western science by Arkoun in studying Islam has become the subject of discussion by Islamic scholars. Arkoun is seen as a structural Muslim by Leonard Binder. Unlike the case of Richard C. Martin, Mark R. Woodward and Dwi S. Atmajaya, who saw Arkoun's Rethinking Islam from Arkoun's work, saw Arkoun as a postmodernist [3].

3.2 The Thoughts of Mohammed Arkoun

There are a number of Arkoun's thoughts, which are contained in the form of books, articles, and papers in French, English, and Arabic. Several works are translated into English and Indonesian, including *The Actuality of a Mediterranean Culture*. Tampere, Finlandia: Institute for Peace Research,1990. *Architectural Alternatives in Deteriorating Societies*. Genewa: Aga Khan, 1992. *The aspect of classical Muslim thought*. Paris: IPN, 1963. *Al-Islam:*Cash wa ijtihad. Beirut: Dar al-Saqi, 1991; ed. 2, 1992.*Min al-Ijtihad ila Naqd al-Aql al-Islami*.London: Dar al-Saqi, 1991.*For a critique of Islamic reason*.Paris*:* Maisonneuve and Larose, 1984 dll. Among the results of his thoughts, several books have been translated into Indonesian. Among others

Rethinking Islam [12] Translated by Yudian W. Asmin. This book is widely distributed in English and provides answers to 24 questions. For example, what do the words "Islam", "Muslim," and "al-Qur'an" mean? What do "revelation" and "tradition" mean? And so on as a way of thinking about the identity of Muslims in the modern era.

Arab Thought (Arabic Thought) [13] This book was translated by Yudian W. Asmin and published by LPMI. This book attempts to explain several important issues, starting with the Quran, whose history needs to be known, and the function of revelation. It also discusses the basis for the formation of classical thought and changes in the thinking of modern Arab thinkers.

In addition to this, there is also a collection of writings about Arkoun's thoughts in the form of a book entitled "*Reading the Koran with Mohammed Arkoun* "[14]. This book contains the results of papers from the study of Arkoun in Indonesia. This book presents a critique of Islamic reasoning, the hermeneutic tradition, semiotics that are offered, reading the Al-Qur'an with Mohammed Arkoun, and issues regarding modernity, postmodernism, politics, and the work of Mohammed Arkoun.

3.3   Modernism

The definition of modernization, in general, needs to be explained here, seeing that Arkoun, with his thoughts, does not provide a clear definition of modernization itself. According to the general Indonesian dictionary, modern means the newest, new, or up-to-date. Thus, modernization means a process to get to the latest or the latest. Modernization is always related

to humans individually and socially. Individually, modernization is always associated with the latest discoveries from someone who eventually became famous as an inventor[15].

According to Ahmed, modernism is a modern view or method, especially the tendency of religious belief to subordinate tradition to conform with modern thinking. Thus, modernism has come to mean the latest phase of world history marked by belief in science, planning, secularism, and progress [16]. Modernism means advanced, progressive, and sparkling. Modernism describes a better life in which all desires and needs can be met and fulfilled. Rationality is a characteristic of modernity where the view of the world needs to be seen physically so that traditional myths and beliefs can be refuted by logic, and rationality can become a guide in life [17].

For Gidden, modernity consists of institutions and modes of behavior that, by the mid-twentieth century, had become world history in their impact. Its key dimensions include industrialism, capitalism, and the institutions of control associated with the rise of the modern nation-state [18].

According to Arkoun, the word modernity was first used in the Christian world between 490 AD and 500 AD, transitioning from the old Roman period to the AD. In Europe, "classic" modernity has been running from the 16th century until the 1950s. Russel, a Western thinker, considers modernity to have been born between 1450 AD and 1500 AD. According to Arkoun, the modern world cannot be separated from the progress of the Ancient Greco-Roman period and the medieval period in which Islamic culture gained a golden age. The Middle Ages in Europe were called the Dark Ages because the world of science was underdeveloped as a result of the power of the church, which dominated all aspects of life at that time. Arkoun sees that in the 7th to 12th centuries when the Western world was still in the dark, science in the Islamic world reached its golden age. This is inseparable from the progress of the Greeks in the era of Hellenism, which influenced Arab-Islamic culture. Then, after the Middle Ages ended in the educational era of the Christian European world, it made progress in the 12-15 centuries, which was the Renaissance century. From the description of the periods of modernization, Arkoun argues that the Muslim world has a historical connection with the Western world, which gave birth to this modernity [15].

Arkoun said that Islam has played a significant role in modernization in the West. For him, progress in Islam and the West has two axles, namely the conventional and classic old axis, followed by the future axis, which is full of innovation, the orientation of the era of progress, and the decisions for the future. Mordenance is a mixture of the two shafts. What is modern in today's era will become traditional in later eras. What was modern in later eras will become traditional in the current era. Mordenan, in Arkoun's thought, has two parts, namely the material and intellectual or customary parts. The material part encompasses all the development that comes from outside the human being. The intellectual or customary part covers various methods, analyses, and intellectual actions of a person to master reality. Arkoun believes material impacts more influence developing countries because they have not progressed economically. On the other hand, Western nations that have already advanced economically have been able to increase their intellectual or cultural aspects. Arkoun believes that the modernization method attempted by the West on non-Western nations (shown in the material aspect) is because many non-Western nations are not yet economically advanced. In an implicit way, Arkoun's explanation of the history of modernity has an interpretation that modernity cannot be separated from the

advancement of scientific knowledge that is growing in the West. In this case, Arkoun indirectly describes the meaning of the exploitation of knowledge processed by human reason [15].

The ideas, concepts, schools, and schools formulated by thinkers, writers, and scholars regarding methodology are also the impact of cultural and historical results that have occurred. Arkoun's view of the historical approach is very important to use. The use of history is one of the terms and tools used by postmodernists. Postmodernists use the scientific terms of history, anthropology, linguistics, philosophy, semiotics, and psychology [19].

Historicism gives rise to the claim of modernity as a level of civilization. In other words, modernity is a product of the penetration of historicism as a set of assumptions about the nature of history and humanity's place in it. Historicism was an earthquake that fundamentally reshaped the intellectual landscape – and produced 'new epistemological and methodological conditions of possibility' [20].

Islamic modernism is a trend that was basically developed by Muhamad Abduh (1905) and Muhammad Iqbal (1938). This term contains several tendencies, for example, reformist interpretations or thematic interpretation schools (madrasah al-tafsir al-mawdu'i), which adhere to thematic methods in interpreting Islamic schools of thought. -religious sects, the tendency of apologetic interpretations, which tend to interpret religious texts based on certain modern ideologies such as democracy, capitalism, or socialism, streams which adhere to maslahah-based theories, and these schools seek to revise a number of methodological al-fiqh proposals such as consensus (ijma'), analogical reasoning (qiyas), cancellation (naskh) and others. Science-oriented reinterpretation is also included in this category because of its tendency toward the findings of modern science as the basis for the interpretation of religious texts as applied by Muhammad `Abduh himself [1].

3.4 Postmodernism

The emergence of the postmodernist movement is the result of the modernist movement, which is seen as experiencing setbacks. Postmodernism seeks to support human life, which originates from prevailing politics and culture. Modernism, which only uses rationality in life, is considered to undermine human morals in life; materialism and capitalism are artificial goals [17]. Postmodernism also refers to a cultural, intellectual, and artistic state that lacks a central hierarchy or clear organizing principles [21].

Postmodernism rejects the term claim of truth in religion and science. Truth does not belong to a particular person or group, but God has absolute truth. Humans are only limited to seeking and processing to approach the truth. As for the truth, according to postmodernism [22], it is something that proceeds and then becomes through its roles and functions, not something that has become (has a form) [19]. Postmodernists rebuke modernists for being naïve about the belief that a work of art is free from divisive political implications [23].

One way to know the characteristics of postmodernism used by Arkoun is through deconstruction. Deconstruction is an analytical technique used by poststructuralists to analyze texts. 'Deconstruction is perhaps best described as a theory of reading which aims to undermine the logic of opposition in texts. While deconstruction does not intend to find the true meaning of a text, it involves two things: 1. Consideration of what is missing from the text, and 2. The foreground in the text is missing or missing [24].

Therefore, the current discussion of postmodernity must be aligned with the historical context of Islamic scientific practice. In the first place, modern knowledge must be placed in its historical context because the meaning of knowledge itself "has been confused from one historical moment to another, and its origins have been shaped by each age's particular vision of man and his relation to the world. Moreover, the postmodern Western interpretation and application of thinking about knowledge, progress, and development have resulted in a "mixture of astonishing achievements as well as unremitting disasters. Postmodern Western Civilization must restart dialogue with Islam to revitalize itself and humanity in general. Against this background, we must think and reflect on how the Western and Islamic worldviews can interfere with each other in order to find the right attitude to make their interactions productive and dynamic [24].

To apply the deconstruction strategy to a religious text, Arkoun suggests 1. "separate the monolinear relationship between text and meaning (interpretation) 2. reveal the belief in the existence of a final relationship between text and meaning 3. open wide possibilities of interpretation of the text 4. find layers -layers of knowledge encompassed by orthodoxy and 5. distinguish between the important and the unimportant.

As far as the postmodernist rejection of all Grand Narratives is concerned, we proclaim the Oneness of Allah and the Truth of His Religion, His Prophets, and His Revelation. Therefore, apart from the Al-Qur'an and the authentic compilation of the hadith of the Prophet SAW, two sources whose truth and finality are established and acknowledged without any doubt, most of the other Islamic literature is based on human thought/interpretation. This can be put to the rigor of deconstruction and/or other textual analysis within a larger philosophical and autobiographical framework using anthropology, psychology, sociology, historicity, etc. In addition, enthusiastic, willing, and creative researchers of Islamic studies should continue to critically assess one another's work with a multidisciplinary approach [24].

In facing the challenges of the times, Arkoun tries to link the latest science and technology from the West with Islam so that he can create a religious world concept and keep up with the times [25]. This effort is the hard work done by Arkoun in exploring Islam by integrating Western science.

3.5 Factors influencing Muhammad Arkoun's thinking

Based on the description above, several factors can be considered to have influenced Muhammad Arkoun's thinking, including in the field of theology. First, social factors, in the form of an attitude toward life formed by the neighborhood family and where he grew up studying, starting from his country of Algeria to settling in France. Second, political factors, originating from the political situation of his time, since he lived in his family environment and after. As with Arkoun's life background, he has grown up with Western knowledge since his student life, so some of his thoughts are taken from Western thoughts. Although Arkoun's thoughts are seen as Western, he is inseparable from the concept of modernization of Islam, which originates from the conflicts his country faced against France in November 1954 and July 1962 to gain independence. In addition, he also saw the conflict that occurred in the Muslim minority in France in dealing with the majority-minority community. Arkoun sees that Muslim society has its own tradition of thought, which is different from the West, which has developed to date. Arkoun suggested increasing efforts to interpret and understand all the problems caused

by modernity in the Islamic world. The Islamic world has had its own characteristics so far, and this traditional aspect is found in the outlook on life that comes from sources of Islamic teachings such as sharia and hadith. Modernity emerged and developed from Western sciences. Therefore, Arkoun tries to collaborate between traditional and modern [15][25].Third, cultural factors, from science, the knowledge he acquired during a study in formal schools, and from his childhood, Arkoun knew three languages he used in his daily life. Kabilian, French, and Arabic are used at certain times. Apart from that, while living and studying in France, Mohammed Arkoun began to influence his thoughts about Islam beyond the influence of everyday language, where he started to study philosophy, Islamology, linguistics, social science, and Western Humanities.

3.6 Figures Influencing the Thought of Muhammad Arkoun

For a thinker, his thoughts can't exist and appear without being influenced by previous and contemporary thinkers. There are several thinkers who influenced Arkoun's mindset, including [25]. Paul Riceour; Riceour said that myths are symbols that explain human reality and have a very important role for humans because it is with human thought that myths are made into something sacred and worshiped, the impact of that is to give birth to a mystical nature and influence on the frozen human mindset, but basically, it is not a myth that must be eliminated but nihilism that must be eliminated. Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss national known as the father of modern linguistics and the structuralist movement, says that language is a set of codes and rules created by society. Language relates to a set of systems related to culture, art, mythology, literature, and other social objects. Jacques Derrida: According to him, humans cannot think and write without referring to certain traditions of thought that have been deposited and preserved by the many texts that are always related. Humans are likened to logocentric, meaning that humans cannot express themselves and cannot think without language. Humans can advance through criticism of their thoughts or those of others. Michel Foucault, A French philosopher of epistemological structuralism, thought that humans in every era express (episteme) in a certain way and humans talk about it in a certain way. And the human way of talking about reality is called discourse. According to him, episteme and discourses are subject to various rules and views of reality, and in every era, people view things differently.

Conclusion

Arkoun is one of the Muslim thinkers who sought to answer the challenges of the times through the methods and approaches he used in studying religious texts through historical, anthropological, linguistic, sociological, and other approaches. Arkoun also tries to restore Islam to how it used to be, which can produce advanced science through postmodernism after the emergence of modernism. Modernists are seen as very exclusive towards modernity without looking back at the compatibility between secular science and religious knowledge. Therefore, there is a need for an understanding of modernism and postmodernism to develop current Islamic thought. Several factors that can be considered to have influenced Muhammad Arkoun thinking were included in the field of theology: first, social factors; second, political factors; and third, cultural factors. The influential figures included Paul Ricouer, Ferdinand de Saussure, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault.

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