

A Methodology for Reading Tafsir Manuscripts: Philological and Hermeneutical Analysis within the Framework of Qirā'ah al-Nuṣūṣ

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the methodology of reading tafsir manuscripts (qirā'ah al-nuṣūṣ) through philological and hermeneutical approaches and to explain the urgency of integrating both approaches within contemporary Qur'anic exegesis studies. The study is motivated by the tendency of tafsir scholarship to separate textual validity, which constitutes the primary concern of philology, from contextual interpretation, which is the central focus of hermeneutics. This research employs a qualitative-descriptive library research method. Data were collected from various primary and secondary sources, including books, journal articles, and other scholarly works relevant to the research topic. Data collection was conducted through documentary research, while data analysis employed content analysis of the selected literature. The findings reveal that philology plays a crucial role in ensuring textual authenticity and validity through manuscript criticism, collation, and textual reconstruction, whereas hermeneutics functions to interpret textual meaning based on historical and social contexts as well as the reader's horizon of understanding. Although these approaches differ in orientation, they are complementary in the interpretative process. This study concludes that the integration of philology and hermeneutics constitutes an ideal methodological framework for reading tafsir manuscripts, as it maintains a balance between textual validity and contextual relevance. Consequently, such an integrated approach produces interpretations that are both academically rigorous and contextually meaningful in addressing the challenges of contemporary tafsir studies.

Keywords: Qirā'ah Al-Nuṣūṣ, Philology, Hermeneutics, Tafsir Methodology

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis metodologi pembacaan naskah tafsir (qirā'ah al-nuṣūṣ) melalui pendekatan filologi dan hermeneutika serta menjelaskan

urgensi integrasi keduanya dalam studi tafsir kontemporer. Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh kecenderungan kajian tafsir yang sering memisahkan antara validitas tekstual yang menjadi fokus filologi dan pemaknaan kontekstual yang menjadi fokus hermeneutika. Penelitian menggunakan metode penelitian kepustakaan (library research) dengan pendekatan kualitatif-deskriptif. Data diperoleh dari berbagai sumber primer dan sekunder berupa buku, artikel jurnal, serta karya ilmiah yang relevan dengan tema penelitian. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui studi dokumentasi, sedangkan analisis data menggunakan metode content analysis terhadap berbagai literatur yang dikaji. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa filologi berperan dalam memastikan keotentikan dan validitas teks melalui kritik naskah, kolasi, dan rekonstruksi teks, sedangkan hermeneutika berfungsi memahami makna teks berdasarkan konteks historis, sosial, dan horizon pembaca. Keduanya memiliki orientasi yang berbeda namun saling melengkapi dalam proses penafsiran. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa integrasi filologi dan hermeneutika merupakan model metodologis yang ideal dalam pembacaan naskah tafsir karena mampu menjaga keseimbangan antara validitas teks dan relevansi makna, sehingga menghasilkan pemahaman yang akurat secara ilmiah sekaligus kontekstual dalam menjawab tantangan studi tafsir kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: Qirā'ah Al-Nuṣūṣ, Filologi, Hermeneutika, Metodologi Tafsir

A. Introduction

The development of methodologies in Qur'anic exegesis (tafsīr) studies demonstrates a shift from classical textual approaches toward more integrative and contextual perspectives. In the reading of tafsir manuscripts (qirā'ah al-nuṣūṣ), issues of textual authenticity, manuscript variants, and transmission dynamics constitute fundamental concerns that require a philological approach. Philology enables the reconstruction of reliable texts through textual criticism, thereby providing a scientifically accountable textual foundation. The urgency of this approach has also been emphasized in contemporary epistemological studies of tafsir, which highlight the importance of source validity in the interpretive process.¹ On the other hand, hermeneutics has evolved as an approach that seeks to understand textual meaning by considering historical, social, and readerly contexts. This approach does not merely regard the text as a product of the past but as a dynamic entity that continuously interacts with contemporary realities.² The study of Qur'anic exegesis (tafsir) manuscripts has become an increasingly significant field within contemporary Islamic studies. Manuscripts serve not only as repositories of religious knowledge but also as historical records that reflect the intellectual, social, and cultural contexts in which they were produced.

Through the examination of tafsir manuscripts, scholars gain access to diverse exegetical traditions that may differ from later printed editions. These manuscripts often preserve unique interpretations, textual variants, and scholarly annotations that are absent from modern publications. Consequently, the investigation of tafsir manuscripts contributes to a deeper understanding of the development of Qur'anic interpretation throughout Islamic history. The growing interest in manuscript studies

¹ Siti Nurhidayati Annisa et al., "Analisis Epistemologis Terhadap Kriteria Mufassir: Telaah Atas Sumber, Metode Dan Validitas Ilmu Dalam Perspektif Ushul Al-Tafsir," 06.1 (2025), h.129.

² Tomi Satria, Duski Samad, dan Firdaus S T Mamad, "Pendekatan Hermeneutika Kontekstual Dalam Tafsir Al- Qur ' an : Kajian Kritis Terhadap Metodologi Fazlur Rahman Dan Abdullah Saeed," 6.1 (2025), h.1143.

highlights the need for systematic methodologies capable of uncovering both the textual and contextual dimensions of these sources.

The vast corpus of Islamic manuscripts scattered across libraries, archives, mosques, and private collections presents both opportunities and challenges for researchers. Many tafsir manuscripts remain unpublished and inadequately cataloged, limiting scholarly access to valuable intellectual heritage. Furthermore, manuscript deterioration, scribal errors, and incomplete copies often complicate the process of textual reconstruction.³ Without an appropriate methodological framework, researchers may overlook important textual evidence embedded within these manuscripts. Therefore, a rigorous approach is required to ensure accurate interpretation and critical engagement with manuscript sources. Such an approach must address both the material characteristics of manuscripts and the meanings conveyed through their texts.

Philology has traditionally played a central role in the study of Islamic manuscripts. As a discipline concerned with textual criticism, linguistic analysis, and the reconstruction of original texts, philology provides essential tools for examining manuscript authenticity and transmission. Through philological methods, researchers can identify scribal interventions, textual variants, and historical layers within a manuscript tradition. These methods help establish reliable editions of texts and reveal the historical trajectory of knowledge transmission.⁴ In the context of tafsir manuscripts, philology enables scholars to distinguish between authorial expressions and later additions introduced by copyists or commentators. Consequently, philological inquiry forms the foundation for any comprehensive analysis of manuscript-based tafsir studies.

Despite its importance, philology alone is insufficient for understanding the broader significance of tafsir manuscripts. While philological analysis focuses primarily on textual accuracy and historical reconstruction, it does not fully address the interpretive dimensions of the text. Tafsir manuscripts are not merely textual artifacts but also intellectual products shaped by theological perspectives, cultural circumstances, and scholarly debates. Understanding these dimensions requires methodologies capable of exploring meaning beyond textual reconstruction. Therefore, hermeneutical approaches have become increasingly relevant in contemporary manuscript studies. Hermeneutics allows researchers to investigate how meaning is produced, negotiated, and transmitted within particular historical and interpretive contexts.

Hermeneutics provides valuable insights into the relationship between text, author, and reader. Within Islamic intellectual traditions, interpretive engagement with sacred texts has long involved considerations of context, language, and intention. Modern hermeneutical theories further emphasize the dynamic interaction between historical circumstances and textual meaning. Applying hermeneutical analysis to tafsir manuscripts enables scholars to explore how exegetes understood the Qur'an within their own intellectual environments. It also facilitates the examination of interpretive

³ Susanto, 'Trends of Educational Technology (EdTech): Students' Perceptions of Technology to Improve the Quality of Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia', *International Journal of Learning Teaching and Educational Research*, 21.6 (2022), 226–46 (p. 227) <<https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.21.6.14>>.

⁴ Siti Zulaikha, Bahrudin Zamawi, and Rafi Ibnu Mirwan Suriyanto, 'Genealogy of the Interpretation of the Holy Qur'an by Mahmud Yunus (A Study of the Context of Modernization of Qur'anic Interpretation in Indonesia)', *ZAD Al-Mufassirin*, 7.2 (2025), 704–30 (p. 705) <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.55759/zam.v7i2.319>>.

strategies employed in addressing theological, legal, and social issues. Consequently, hermeneutics complements philology by extending analysis from textual form to textual meaning.

The integration of philological and hermeneutical approaches has emerged as a promising direction in manuscript studies. Rather than treating textual criticism and interpretation as separate endeavors, contemporary scholarship increasingly recognizes their interdependence.⁵ Accurate interpretation requires reliable textual reconstruction, while textual reconstruction gains significance through meaningful interpretation. Combining these approaches allows researchers to examine manuscripts as both historical documents and interpretive texts. Such integration is particularly relevant for tafsir manuscripts, where textual transmission and exegetical meaning are closely interconnected. Therefore, an interdisciplinary framework is necessary for achieving a comprehensive understanding of manuscript traditions.

Within Islamic scholarship, the concept of *Qirā'ah al-Nuṣūṣ* offers a useful framework for integrating textual and interpretive analysis. Literally meaning “the reading of texts,” *Qirā'ah al-Nuṣūṣ* encompasses approaches that emphasize careful engagement with textual structures, linguistic features, historical contexts, and interpretive horizons. This framework encourages readers to move beyond superficial readings toward a deeper understanding of textual meaning. It recognizes that texts are products of specific intellectual traditions while remaining open to renewed interpretation. Consequently, *Qirā'ah al-Nuṣūṣ* provides a conceptual bridge between philological precision and hermeneutical reflection. Its application to tafsir manuscripts has the potential to enrich contemporary manuscript studies.

The relevance of *Qirā'ah al-Nuṣūṣ* becomes particularly evident when dealing with classical tafsir literature. Tafsir manuscripts often contain complex layers of commentary, intertextual references, and scholarly debates. Understanding these elements requires more than textual verification; it necessitates interpretive engagement with the intellectual world of the exegete. Through the lens of *Qirā'ah al-Nuṣūṣ*, researchers can analyze how textual structures contribute to the production of meaning. This approach also facilitates the exploration of relationships between Qur'anic interpretation and broader Islamic intellectual traditions. As a result, manuscript analysis becomes a process of understanding both textual transmission and intellectual discourse.

Recent developments in manuscript studies have highlighted the importance of interdisciplinary methodologies. Scholars increasingly draw upon history, linguistics, literary criticism, codicology, and digital humanities to investigate manuscript traditions. These developments demonstrate that manuscripts cannot be adequately understood through a single disciplinary perspective. Tafsir manuscripts, in particular, require approaches capable of addressing their textual, material, and interpretive complexities. Integrating philology and hermeneutics within the framework of *Qirā'ah al-Nuṣūṣ* aligns with this broader interdisciplinary trend. It provides a methodological foundation for examining manuscripts in a holistic and contextually informed manner.

Furthermore, the study of tafsir manuscripts contributes significantly to the preservation and revitalization of Islamic intellectual heritage. Many manuscript collections remain understudied despite their potential to illuminate forgotten

⁵ Adel Ibrahim Abushaar, 'Early Personal Quranic Manuscripts in Light of the Sana'a Palimpsest (DAM 01-27.1): An Analytical and Foundational Study', *Journal of College of Sharia and Islamic Studies, Qatar University*, 43.2 (2025), 127–53 (p. 128) <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.29117/jcsis.2025.0419>>.

scholarly traditions. By developing effective methodologies for manuscript analysis, researchers can facilitate access to these valuable resources and promote their inclusion in contemporary academic discourse. Such efforts also support broader initiatives aimed at preserving cultural heritage and strengthening historical awareness. Consequently, methodological innovation in manuscript studies has implications that extend beyond the academic sphere. It contributes to the safeguarding and dissemination of intellectual traditions for future generations.

Another important consideration is the diversity of exegetical approaches represented in manuscript traditions. Tafsir manuscripts reflect a wide range of theological orientations, legal schools, linguistic methodologies, and regional intellectual cultures. This diversity challenges simplistic narratives regarding the history of Qur'anic interpretation. Through systematic manuscript analysis, researchers can uncover alternative voices and neglected perspectives within Islamic scholarship. Philological and hermeneutical approaches together enable a nuanced understanding of this diversity. Such understanding enriches contemporary discussions concerning the plurality of Islamic intellectual traditions.

The methodological challenges associated with tafsir manuscripts further underscore the need for an integrated analytical framework. Researchers must navigate issues such as textual corruption, multiple manuscript witnesses, marginal annotations, and uncertain authorship.⁶ At the same time, they must interpret the meanings conveyed by these texts within their historical and intellectual settings. Addressing these challenges requires a methodology that combines technical expertise with interpretive sensitivity. The framework of *Qirā'ah al-Nuṣūṣ* offers such a possibility by encouraging rigorous textual examination alongside contextual interpretation. This balance is essential for producing reliable and meaningful scholarship.

In addition, the increasing digitization of manuscript collections has created new opportunities for research. Digital technologies facilitate access to manuscripts previously unavailable to scholars and support comparative analysis across multiple collections. However, greater accessibility does not eliminate the need for sound methodological principles. Researchers must still determine how texts should be read, interpreted, and contextualized. The integration of philological and hermeneutical methods remains crucial in ensuring that digital resources are used effectively. Therefore, methodological discussions continue to be relevant in the digital age of manuscript studies.

This article argues that the framework of *Qirā'ah al-Nuṣūṣ* provides a productive methodological foundation for reading tafsir manuscripts. By combining philological analysis with hermeneutical interpretation, this framework enables researchers to address both the textual integrity and interpretive significance of manuscript sources. Such an approach moves beyond the limitations of purely technical or purely theoretical methodologies. It recognizes the manuscript as both a material object and a carrier of meaning. Consequently, it offers a more comprehensive understanding of Qur'anic exegetical traditions preserved in manuscript form.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to formulate a methodology for reading tafsir manuscripts through the integration of philological and hermeneutical analysis within the framework of *Qirā'ah al-Nuṣūṣ*. The study seeks to demonstrate

⁶ Al-Raghib Al-Asfahani, 'Al-Mufradāt Fī Gharīb Al-Qur'ān. Tahqīq Ṣafwān 'Adnān Dāwūdī' (Damaskus: Dār al-Qalam, 1992), p. 486.

how textual criticism, historical contextualization, and interpretive inquiry can be combined into a coherent analytical model. By doing so, it contributes to ongoing discussions concerning manuscript studies, Qur'anic exegesis, and Islamic intellectual history. Moreover, it provides practical guidance for researchers engaged in the study of manuscript-based tafsir literature. Ultimately, the proposed methodology seeks to enhance both the rigor and depth of contemporary manuscript research

B. Literature Review

In recent years, studies on tafsir manuscripts have experienced significant development alongside growing academic interest in the intellectual heritage of Islam preserved in various manuscripts. This development is marked not only by the application of philological approaches to reconstruct texts but also by the emergence of interpretive approaches that seek to understand the dimensions of meaning, context, and the social functions of tafsir texts. Therefore, research on the methodology of reading tafsir manuscripts within the framework of *Qirā'ah al-Nuṣūṣ* should be grounded in relevant findings from previous studies.

In the context of philological studies of tafsir manuscripts, Kuswandi argue that research on tafsir manuscripts must begin with textual reconstruction to ensure the authenticity and validity of the sources employed. According to them, the philological approach functions not only to edit and restore texts but also to uncover intellectual history, patterns of knowledge transmission, and the characteristics of exegetical methodologies that developed within particular scholarly environments. Through this approach, tafsir manuscripts can be understood both as documents recording the dynamics of Islamic thought and as media for the transmission of knowledge across generations.⁷

In line with the importance of philological analysis, attention to the material dimensions of manuscripts has also expanded in contemporary Islamic manuscript studies. In this regard, Abushaar emphasizes that the study of Islamic manuscripts requires codicological, paleographical, and historical analyses to understand the processes of textual production, copying, and dissemination. According to him, the physical aspects of manuscripts often contain important information absent from the textual content itself, such as intellectual networks, the social context of scribes, and the history of manuscript transmission. Consequently, the study of tafsir manuscripts should not be limited to textual content alone but must also consider their accompanying material dimensions.⁸

Beyond developments in philology, contemporary tafsir studies have demonstrated an increasingly strong tendency toward contextual and multidisciplinary approaches. In their discussion of the epistemology of contemporary tafsir, Muttaqin, Alba, and Haq explain that Qur'anic interpretation is no longer viewed merely as the reproduction of literal meanings but rather as a process of dialogue between text and social reality. They emphasize that historical, linguistic, and social approaches serve as essential instruments for achieving a more comprehensive understanding of the

⁷ Dedi Kuswandi, Ris'an Rusli, dan Nyimas Umi Kalsum, "A PHILOLOGICAL STUDY AND ANALYSIS OF TAFSIR METHODOLOGY: The 19th-Century Palembang Malay Qur'an Commentary Manuscript by Masagus Muzammil," 24.1 (2025), h.321–324.

⁸ Adel Ibrahim Abushaar, "Early Personal Quranic Manuscripts in Light of the Sana'a Palimpsest (DAM 01-27.1): An Analytical and Foundational Study," *Journal of College of Sharia and Islamic Studies, Qatar University*, 43.2 (2025), h.128–129.

Qur'an. Accordingly, interpretation is regarded as a dynamic process that remains open to changing societal contexts.⁹

This development is also evident in the Indonesian tafsir tradition, which continues to undergo methodological renewal. Zulaikha, Zamawi, and Surianto found that the modernization of tafsir in Indonesia is characterized by efforts to connect the classical exegetical heritage with the needs of modern society. According to them, contemporary exegetes seek not only to explain textual meanings but also to actualize Qur'anic messages so that they remain relevant to contemporary social, educational, cultural, and religious challenges. These findings indicate that tafsir continuously evolves in response to changing contexts.¹⁰

Despite the emergence of new approaches, the relationship with the classical exegetical tradition remains indispensable. Hasan, Ahmad, and Islam assert that the legacy of classical tafsir continues to serve as an important epistemological foundation for the development of contemporary exegetical methodologies. According to them, the exegetical tradition that emerged during the early Islamic period provides fundamental principles that can serve as a basis for formulating new approaches. Therefore, methodological renewal in tafsir should ideally be pursued through dialogue between tradition and innovation rather than through a rupture with the classical heritage.¹¹

Meanwhile, studies on the characteristics of Nusantara tafsir reveal methodological complexities worthy of scholarly attention. Mutamakin, Afiyah, Al-Turki, and Fannani found that *Marāḥ Labīd*, authored by Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani, demonstrates a phenomenon of exegetical hybridity. This phenomenon is reflected in the integration of diverse sources, methods, and approaches within a single exegetical work. Their findings suggest that tafsir texts are fundamentally products of interaction among Islamic scholarly traditions, the intellectual experiences of exegetes, and the socio-cultural contexts in which such works were produced.¹²

The study conducted by T. Satria demonstrates that contextual hermeneutics can expand the meaning of tafsir by relating textual interpretations to modern social conditions.¹³ Furthermore, the tendency toward integrating diverse methodological approaches is increasingly evident in recent scholarship. Y. Suparman and Z. Soga show that the combination of tafsir, ta'wīl, and hermeneutics generates a more comprehensive understanding of Qur'anic texts.¹⁴ Similarly, R. Rahmawati's study of

⁹ Sufyan Muttaqin, Cecep Alba, and Sansan Ziaul Haq, 'Model Penafsiran Kontemporer : Kajian Epistemologis Terhadap Al-Tafsir Al-Wasit Li-Al- Qur 'an Al-Karim', 20.2 (2024), 137–64.

¹⁰ Siti Zulaikha, Bahrudin Zamawi, dan Rafi Ibnu Mirwan Surianto, "Genealogy of the Interpretation of the Holy Qur ' an by Mahmud Yunus (A Study of the Context of Modernization of Qur ' anic Interpretation in Indonesia)," *ZAD Al-Mufasssirin*, 7.2 (2025), h.705–715.

¹¹ Mahdi Hasan, Choirul Ahmad, dan Rafiqul Islam, "Classical Insights , Contemporary Relevance : Understanding Tafsir bi-al- Ma'thūr in Qur'anic Studies," *STUDIA QURANIKA: Jurnal Studi Quran*, 9.5 (2025), h.156–158.

¹² Mutamakin et al., "Exegetical Hybridity in Nusantara Qur ' anic Interpretation : A Study of Marāḥ Labīd by Syekh Nawawi al -Bantani," *QOF: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir*, 9.2 (2025), h.228–230.

¹³ Tomi Satria, Duski Samad, dan Firdaus S T Mamad, "Pendekatan Hermeneutika Kontekstual Dalam Tafsir Al- Qur ' an : Kajian Kritis Terhadap Metodologi Fazlur Rahman Dan Abdullah Saeed," 6.1 (2025), h.1143.

¹⁴ Yogi Suparman dan ZAINUDIN Soga, "Studi Analisis Tafsir, Takwil dan Hermeneutika Dalam Memahami al-Qur'an," 3.1 (2024), h.110.

Fazlur Rahman's thought emphasizes the importance of a historical-contextual approach in dynamically reconstructing the moral message of the Qur'an.¹⁵

Nevertheless, most of these studies still tend to separate philological analysis from hermeneutical approaches, resulting in partial readings. Philology often ends at the stage of textual reconstruction without exploring broader dimensions of meaning, while hermeneutics sometimes pays insufficient attention to textual validity as the foundation of interpretation. This concern is also highlighted by H. Maulana, who stresses the need for stronger methodological integration within modern tafsir studies.¹⁶ as well as by U. Al-Faruq, who emphasizes the importance of a hermeneutical framework firmly grounded in textual validity.¹⁷

Based on the aforementioned studies, it can be understood that the study of tafsir manuscripts requires an approach capable of addressing both textual and contextual dimensions. Within this framework, *Qirā'ah al-Nuṣūṣ* provides a relevant conceptual foundation because it enables the integration of philological and hermeneutical analyses. The philological approach is employed to ensure the validity and authenticity of the text, while the hermeneutical approach is utilized to understand the construction of meaning, the intellectual horizon of the exegete, and the socio-historical contexts underlying the interpretive process. Consequently, the reading of tafsir manuscripts produces not only accurate textual reconstructions but also deeper insights into the dynamics of meaning embedded within the texts.¹⁸ Therefore, the integration of philology and hermeneutics within the framework of *Qirā'ah al-Nuṣūṣ* constitutes an urgent necessity for producing exegetical readings that are accurate, critical, and contextual.

C. Method

This study employs a qualitative research design based on library research. This method is used to examine concepts, theories, and scholarly developments concerning the methodology of reading tafsir manuscripts (*qirā'ah al-nuṣūṣ*), particularly those related to philological and hermeneutical approaches. The research data consist of both primary and secondary sources obtained from books, scholarly journal articles, conference proceedings, and previous studies relevant to the topic under investigation.

Data were collected through documentation studies by identifying, cataloging, and reviewing various sources that discuss philology, hermeneutics, tafsir methodology, and the integration of these approaches within Qur'anic studies. The collected data were subsequently classified according to major research themes, including the concept of *qirā'ah al-nuṣūṣ*, the philological approach, the hermeneutical approach, and the relevance of integrating these approaches in contemporary tafsir studies.

Data analysis was conducted using the content analysis method, which involves a systematic examination of the literature to identify patterns, concepts, and

¹⁵ Rahmawati Rahmawati dan Muhtolib MUhtolib, "Melacak Jejak Hermeneutika Fazlur Rahman Dalam Wacana Teori Tafsir: Perspektif Historis dan Epistemologis," 2.1 (2024), h.55.

¹⁶ Hasbi Maulana, "Aliran Hermeneutika, Penerapannya Dalam Ulumul Qur'an, dan Tipologi Penafsiran Kontemporer," 2.2 (2025), h.50.

¹⁷ Umar Al-faruq et al., "Tafsir Kontemporer dan Hermeneutika Al- Qur ' an : Memahami Teks Suci Al- Qur-an Dalam Konteks Kontemporer," 1.4 (2024), h.235.

¹⁸ Kuswandi, Rusli, dan Kalsum; Abushaar; Muttaqin, Alba, dan Haq; Mutamakim et al..

interrelationships among ideas relevant to the research object. The analytical process consisted of data reduction, data categorization, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. This approach was employed to develop a comprehensive understanding of the contribution of philology in ensuring textual validity and the role of hermeneutics in producing contextual interpretations. Ultimately, the study seeks to formulate an integrative model for reading tafsir manuscripts that is relevant to the advancement of contemporary tafsir studies.

D. Results and Discussion

I. The Concept of *Qirā'ah al-Nuṣūṣ*

Conceptually, the term *qirā'ah al-nuṣūṣ* (قراءة النصوص) consists of the word *qirā'ah* (قراءة), which means reading or the process of understanding a text, and *nuṣūṣ* (نصوص), the plural form of *naṣṣ* (نص). In classical Arabic lexicography, *naṣṣ* is defined as an expression whose meaning is clear and explicit. In *Lisān al-'Arab*, authored by Ibn Manẓūr, it is stated: “*al-naṣṣ: raf uka al-shay'a, wa naṣṣa al-ḥadītha: aḥharahu*” (“*naṣṣ* means to elevate or make something apparent, and to state a report means to make it manifest”), indicating that *naṣṣ* is associated with the explicit manifestation of meaning. Similarly, in *Al-Mufradāt fī Ghārib al-Qur'ān*, Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī explains that *naṣṣ* refers to a meaning that is directly and clearly indicated by an expression, thus possessing a high degree of semantic clarity.¹⁹ Accordingly, *qirā'ah al-nuṣūṣ* may be defined terminologically as a systematic method of reading and understanding texts characterized by clear structures and meanings. In contemporary scholarship, textual reading is understood as a methodological process involving critical analysis of texts as objects of scientific inquiry.²⁰

Within this framework, philology constitutes a discipline concerned with the study of classical texts through manuscript analysis. Philology encompasses two principal aspects: codicology (the study of the physical characteristics of manuscripts) and textology (the study of textual content), both aimed at reconstructing a text that most closely approximates its original form. This process includes manuscript inventory, description, collation, and textual criticism. Consequently, philology is oriented toward the text as a material object—namely, “what is written.” Modern philological studies emphasize that manuscript analysis must systematically address both physical and textual dimensions in order to ensure textual validity.²¹ Furthermore, research on Islamic manuscripts demonstrates that textual variants may significantly affect the understanding of meaning, making textual criticism an essential stage of scholarly inquiry.²²

In contrast, hermeneutics (*al-hirmīnūṭīqā*) is a theory and method of interpretation that focuses on understanding the meaning of texts. Hermeneutics maintains that meaning is not solely contained within the text itself but is also

¹⁹ Ibn Manzur, 'Lisān Al-'Arab' (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1994), pp. 97–98; Al-Asfahani.

²⁰ Sufyan Muttaqin, Cecep Alba, dan Sansan Ziaul Haq, “Model Penafsiran Kontemporer : Kajian Epistemologis terhadap al-Tafsir al-Wasit li-al- Qur 'an al-Karim,” 20.2 (2024), h.160.

²¹ Ahmad Rijal Nasrullah dan Ade Kosasih, “Substansi dan Metodologi Filologi Dalam Naskah Kumpulan Mantera,” 9.2 (2018), h.300.

²² Ahmad Bagas Satriyo, “Analisis Kodikologi dan Tekstologi Manuskrip Mushaf Al- Qur ' an Mbah Syatawi Kudus,” 5.September (2025), h.169.

generated through the interaction among the text, its historical context, and the reader. From this perspective, texts are understood dynamically through interpretive processes that take social and cultural backgrounds into account. In contemporary Qur'anic studies, hermeneutics is employed to uncover contextual meanings that cannot be adequately reached through purely textual approaches.²³

The fundamental difference between philology and hermeneutics lies in their epistemological orientations. Philology focuses on the text as a material object and seeks to establish its authenticity and structural integrity—namely, “what is written.” Hermeneutics, on the other hand, is oriented toward meaning and seeks to understand the intended significance of the text—namely, “what is meant.”²⁴ Modern philological studies emphasize that a text must first be verified through manuscript criticism before interpretation can be undertaken, whereas hermeneutics stresses that meaning is dynamic and contextual, shaped by the circumstances and perspectives of readers.²⁵

Nevertheless, philology and hermeneutics should not be viewed as dichotomous approaches but rather as complementary components within the framework of *qirā'ah al-nuṣūṣ*. Philology provides textual validity as the foundation for analysis, while hermeneutics offers deeper contextual interpretation of meaning. This integration is further supported by contemporary philological scholarship, which demonstrates that textual analysis cannot be separated from an understanding of meaning and context²⁶. Therefore, a model of *qirā'ah al-nuṣūṣ* grounded in both philology and hermeneutics produces a mode of reading that is not only textually accurate but also interpretively relevant for contemporary tafsir studies.

2. The Philological Approach (Technical Analysis of Manuscripts)

The philological approach in tafsir studies is grounded in the principle of *tahqīq al-nuṣūṣ* (textual verification), namely the process of textual criticism aimed at establishing the version of a manuscript that most closely approximates its original form. Methodologically, *tahqīq* involves manuscript inventory, collation (comparison among manuscript copies), analysis of textual variants, and the preparation of a critical edition. Its primary objective is to ensure textual authenticity before interpretation is undertaken. In modern philological scholarship, this method is regarded as the initial epistemological stage in understanding religious texts, since textual inaccuracies may directly affect interpretation.²⁷

One of the most important aspects of *tahqīq al-nuṣūṣ* is manuscript comparison (*muqābalah al-nusakh*), namely the process of comparing different copies of a manuscript to identify textual variations (*ikhtilāf al-nuṣūṣ*). Such variations may include differences in wording, omissions, or additions that emerge during the transmission process. In practice, philologists employ stemmatological principles to trace

²³ Muhammad Fauzi Noor dan Eko Saputra, “Hermeneutics In The Interpretation of Qur'an,” 2.1 (2024), h.32–38; M Rama Haqiqi, “Hermeneutika dalam Diskursus Tafsir : Konsep , Sejarah Perkembangan , dan Penggunaannya dalam Tafsir Ibnu Katsir,” 4 (2024).h.405.

²⁴ Ade Iqbal Badruzaman dan Ade Kosasih, “Teori Filologi dan Penerapannya Masalah Naskah-Teks dalam Filologi,” 9.2 (2018), h.20.

²⁵ Hasiolan Hasiolan dan Agus Susanto, “Epistemologi Hermeneutika dalam Wacana Tafsir,” 02.01 (2023), h.5–7.

²⁶ Baiti Abir Magfiroh dan Zainal Muttaqin, “Aspek Kodikologi dan Tekstologi Manuskrip Nusantara : Studi Kasus Mushaf Al- Qur ' an Mbah Ismail Pendahuluan salah satunya dapat dilakukan melalui cabang dari ilmu filologi yang berfokus pada fisik,” 2.1 (2024), h.120; Ali Fajar et al., “Analisis Kodikologi Terhadap Naskah Tafsir Manuskrip Arab Koleksi Khastara: Khazanah Pustaka Nasional,” 18.1 (2026).

²⁷ Nasrullah and Kosasih; Satriyo.h.310.

relationships among manuscripts and determine the most authoritative textual witness. Recent studies demonstrate that the analysis of textual variants is particularly significant in tafsir research because it reveals the dynamics of Islamic intellectual transmission.²⁸

Furthermore, the philological approach requires the identification of fundamental manuscript elements, including the author (*mu'allif*), chains of scholarly transmission, and the period of composition. Identifying the author is essential for determining the scholarly authority of the text, while tracing intellectual transmission helps reconstruct the movement of knowledge across generations. Determining the date of composition is equally important for understanding the historical and social contexts that shaped the text. In tafsir manuscript studies, such analyses are frequently employed to classify exegetical trends and trace the development of interpretive methodologies over time.²⁹

Nevertheless, manuscript transmission involves various textual problems that must be critically examined. These include interpolation (textual additions by scribes), copying errors (*taṣḥīf* and *taḥrīf*), and editorial modifications that may occur intentionally or unintentionally. Such errors may involve letter substitutions, word omissions, or sentence confluences that alter the original meaning of the text. Modern philological studies emphasize that these phenomena are inherent features of manuscript traditions, making textual criticism an indispensable scholarly procedure.³⁰

A concrete example can be found in classical tafsir works, where differences in wording frequently appear among manuscripts transmitted through different textual lineages. Such variations may influence the interpretation of Qur'anic verses, particularly when key terms or syntactic structures are involved. Consequently, the philological approach enables scholars to evaluate the reliability of textual readings before employing them as the basis for interpretation. Contemporary research increasingly demonstrates that the integration of textual criticism and exegetical analysis confirms that textual validity constitutes a prerequisite for interpretive validity.³¹

Therefore, the philological approach embodied in *taḥqīq al-nuṣūṣ* functions not merely as a technical method in manuscript studies but also as an epistemological foundation for tafsir scholarship. Through textual verification, variant analysis, and historical contextualization, philology ensures that interpretation is grounded in a valid and academically accountable text.

3. The Hermeneutical Approach

The hermeneutical approach to tafsir studies is based on the assumption that textual understanding cannot be separated from the dynamic relationship among the text, the author (or exegete), and the reader. A text does not exist as a static entity; rather, it is a linguistic product embedded within a particular context. Likewise, the exegete brings intellectual, social, and ideological backgrounds that shape the interpretive process. Readers also play an active role in constructing meaning through

²⁸ Magfiroh and Muttaqin.h.115.

²⁹ Fajar et al..

³⁰ Wening Pawestri, Undang Ahmad Darsa, dan Elis Suryani, "Kritik Naskah (Kodikologi) Atas Naskah Sejarah Ragasela," 9.2 (2018).h.202.; Misbahul Munir, "Pendekatan Filologi dalam Studi Islam; Analisis Teoritis dan Metodologis," 19.1 (2024).h.66.

³¹ Muttaqin, Alba, and Haq.h.141.

their own experiences and horizons of understanding. Meaning, therefore, emerges from the interaction of these three elements rather than from the text alone.³²

Within the hermeneutical framework, historical and social contexts constitute fundamental elements of interpretation. Religious texts, including works of tafsir, are understood as products of specific historical circumstances, and therefore their interpretation must take into account the social, political, and cultural conditions surrounding their emergence. This approach argues that without such contextual understanding, interpretation risks becoming reductive and ahistorical. Contemporary scholarship demonstrates that hermeneutics regards the relationship between text and social reality as central to the production of meaningful and relevant interpretations.³³

Furthermore, hermeneutics introduces the concept of the *horizon of meaning*, referring to the encounter between the horizon of the text and that of the reader. The textual horizon encompasses the historical background and original intention of the author, whereas the reader's horizon reflects contemporary conditions, experiences, and perspectives. Understanding occurs when these horizons interact and influence one another, producing meanings that continuously evolve. Contemporary hermeneutical theory therefore maintains that meaning is never final but remains open to reinterpretation in response to changing intellectual and social contexts³⁴.

Based on these principles, hermeneutics maintains that textual meaning is neither singular nor fixed but plural and dynamic. Interpretation depends not only on linguistic structures but also on the interaction between text and reader within particular contexts. Consequently, different readings may generate different interpretations according to the backgrounds and horizons of individual readers. Recent studies indicate that hermeneutical approaches enable religious texts to be understood in ways that are more contextual, inclusive, and relevant to the needs of modern societies, while emphasizing that interpretation remains an ongoing dialogical process.³⁵

4. The Integration of Philology and Hermeneutics

a. Philology without Hermeneutics: Rigid Textual Validity

A purely philological approach focuses primarily on establishing textual validity through *taḥqīq al-nuṣūṣ*, including manuscript criticism, collation, and textual reconstruction. The result is a text that has been scientifically verified and possesses a high degree of authenticity. However, when this approach is not accompanied by hermeneutical analysis, the resulting understanding tends to remain formalistic and textual, paying insufficient attention to the dynamics of meaning within historical and social contexts. Consequently, interpretation becomes rigid and limited to linguistic structures without adequately addressing contemporary intellectual developments.

³² Haqiqi.h.406.

³³ M. Khai Hanif Yuli Edi, "Pendekatan Tekstual; Kontekstual Dan Hermeneutika Dalam Penafsiran Al-Qur'an," 3.1 (2023), h.108.

³⁴ M Brilliant Ilham P et al., "Dekonstruksi Tafsir Tekstual Melalui Hermeneutika Derrida : Implikasi Bagi Studi Al- Qur ' an," 02 (2025), 335–47; Aryandi Eka Putra, Tasya Salsabila, dan Laila Sari Masyhur, "Hermeneutika Dalam Penafsiran Al- Qur ' an : Analisis Metode Tafsir Muhammad Arkoun," 13 (2025), h.90.

³⁵ Ahmad Ali Farhan, "Hermeneutika dalam tafsir al- qur ' an: antara pembacaan kontekstual dan risiko desakralisasi makna," 4 (2026), 502–7; Cinta Rohaini Munthe dan Mala Purnawati, "Pengertian dan ruang lingkup hermeneutika dalam kajian tafsir," 8.1, h.109.

Modern philological scholarship suggests that textual validity alone is insufficient for achieving a comprehensive understanding of religious texts.³⁶

b. Hermeneutics without Philology: Expansive but Subjective Meaning

Conversely, a hermeneutical approach that lacks textual verification may generate broad and contextually rich interpretations but remains vulnerable to excessive subjectivity. By emphasizing the interaction among text, context, and reader, hermeneutics allows for interpretations that are adaptive and socially relevant. However, without assurance that the text itself is philologically sound, interpretation may be built upon weak or even erroneous foundations. This creates the possibility of meaning distortion resulting from textual corruption or inauthentic additions. Contemporary hermeneutical studies therefore stress the necessity of methodological controls to ensure that interpretation remains within academically credible boundaries³⁷.

c. The Integration of Philology and Hermeneutics: Validity and Contextuality

The ideal approach within *qirā'ah al-nuṣūṣ* is the integration of philology and hermeneutics as complementary methodological frameworks. Philology ensures textual authenticity through manuscript criticism, thereby providing an objective foundation for analysis. Hermeneutics, meanwhile, explores textual meaning by considering historical, social, and readerly contexts. This integration produces readings that are both textually accurate and contextually relevant. Recent research in tafsir studies demonstrates that combining textual criticism with hermeneutical approaches helps maintain a balance between scholarly objectivity and interpretive dynamism, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of religious texts³⁸.

5. Application in Tafsir Studies

a. Classical Tafsir: The Dominance of the Philological Approach (Transmission and Language)

In the classical tafsir tradition, the dominant approach was philological, with a strong emphasis on *riwāyah* (transmission) and linguistic analysis. Classical exegetes sought to understand the Qur'an through Qur'anic cross-referencing, Prophetic traditions, and the opinions of the Companions and Successors, accompanied by grammatical (*i'rāb*) and lexical analysis. This model reflects an orientation toward textual validity and the authority of transmitted sources. A representative example is the work of Ibn Kathir, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, which relies extensively on prophetic reports and transmitted traditions as the primary basis of interpretation. This approach exhibits a philological character because it focuses on "what is written" and how the text was understood within the formative Islamic tradition. Recent studies confirm that classical tafsir demonstrates a strong commitment to textuality and authoritative transmission.³⁹

b. Contemporary Tafsir: The Dominance of the Hermeneutical Approach (Contextual Interpretation)

Unlike classical tafsir, contemporary exegetical scholarship increasingly incorporates hermeneutical approaches by emphasizing social context, historical circumstances, and contemporary societal needs. Interpretation is no longer based solely on transmitted reports but also on the relevance of Qur'anic meanings to present-day realities. In this framework, the text is understood through the interaction

³⁶ Nasrullah and Kosasih.h.308.

³⁷ Putra, Salsabila, and Masyhur; Hasiolan and Susanto.h.91.

³⁸ Magfiroh dan Muttaqinh.117; Muttaqin, Alba, dan Haq.h.142.

³⁹ Haqiqi.h.407.

between the normative message of the Qur'an and modern social conditions. One prominent representative of this approach is M. Quraish Shihab through his work *Tafsir al-Miṣbāḥ*, which emphasizes contextual interpretation while maintaining close attention to linguistic and structural dimensions of the Qur'anic text. This approach reflects a hermeneutical orientation because it seeks to answer the question of "what is meant" within contemporary life. Current scholarship indicates that modern tafsir increasingly prioritizes contextual relevance and social applicability.⁴⁰

c. Integration in Exegetical Practice

In practice, classical and contemporary tafsir should not be viewed as mutually exclusive but rather as complementary approaches. Classical tafsir provides the philological foundation of textual validity and transmitted authority, while contemporary tafsir expands interpretive possibilities through contextual approaches. Consequently, an integrative methodology is essential to ensure that interpretation remains both textually accurate and contextually meaningful. Recent studies in tafsir scholarship suggest that combining *riwāyah*-based (philological) and hermeneutical (contextual) approaches represents the most effective model for achieving a comprehensive understanding of the Qur'an.⁴¹ The development of tafsir methodology can therefore be understood as a movement from textual dominance toward a more integrated engagement with both text and context.

6. Critiques and Challenges

a. The Risk of Hermeneutics: Interpretive Relativism

While hermeneutics provides broad opportunities for contextual interpretation, it also carries the risk of interpretive relativism. Emphasis on the role of the reader, social context, and historical dynamics may render textual meaning excessively dependent on the subjective perspective of the interpreter. As a result, the distinction between valid and speculative interpretations can become blurred, leading to uncontrolled pluralism of meaning. Contemporary critiques of hermeneutics highlight this tendency as a form of meaning deconstruction that may undermine textual authority if not accompanied by rigorous methodological safeguards.⁴²

b. The Risk of Philology: Textual Reductionism

Conversely, a philological approach that focuses exclusively on textual verification through manuscript criticism may fall into textual reductionism. Excessive attention to language, structure, and authenticity can neglect broader dimensions of meaning, including social context and contemporary relevance. As a result, interpretation may become rigid and insufficiently responsive to changing circumstances. Modern philological scholarship indicates that although textual verification is indispensable, an approach confined solely to textual concerns is inadequate for achieving a comprehensive understanding of religious texts.⁴³

c. The Solution: Returning to *Qawā'id al-Tafsīr*

To avoid these two extremes, a methodological framework is required that balances textual validity and interpretive depth through the application of *qawā'id al-tafsīr* (principles of Qur'anic exegesis). These principles serve as foundational guidelines for interpreting the Qur'an, including interpreting the Qur'an through the Qur'an itself, through Prophetic traditions, and through careful attention to Arabic language and the circumstances of revelation. In this way, *qawā'id al-tafsīr* function as

⁴⁰ Muttaqin, Alba, and Haq.h.142.

⁴¹ Magfiroh and Muttaqin.h.116.

⁴² Hasiolan and Susanto; Putra, Salsabila, and Masyhur.h.91.

⁴³ Nasrullah and Kosasih.h.305.

a methodological control mechanism that safeguards interpretation from departing from textual authority while remaining open to contextual meaning. Recent studies demonstrate that the application of exegetical principles effectively bridges textual and contextual approaches in a balanced manner, producing interpretations that are both objective and relevant.⁴⁴ Accordingly, the integration of philology, hermeneutics, and *qawā'id al-tafsīr* offers a methodological solution to the challenges of contemporary tafsir studies.

⁴⁴ Muttaqin, Alba, and Haq; Magfiroh and Muttaqin.h.117.

Conclusion

The methodology of *qirā'ah al-nuṣūṣ* in tafsir studies constitutes a scholarly approach to reading and understanding texts through two principal frameworks: philology and hermeneutics. Philology functions to establish textual validity through the processes of *taḥqīq al-nuṣūṣ*, textual criticism, manuscript analysis, and the identification of textual variants, thereby producing authentic and academically reliable texts. This approach treats the text as a material object and focuses primarily on the dimension of “what is written”. Hermeneutics, by contrast, seeks to understand textual meaning through the analysis of historical and social contexts, as well as the relationship between the text, the author, and the reader. This approach emphasizes that textual meaning is not singular or fixed but emerges from the dynamic interaction between the text and the reader’s horizon of understanding. Consequently, hermeneutics is concerned with the dimension of “what is meant” within a text. In practice, philology and hermeneutics should not be viewed as dichotomous approaches but rather as complementary methodologies that must be integrated. Philology without hermeneutics may produce readings that are textually valid but interpretively rigid, whereas hermeneutics without philology risks generating subjective interpretations that lack a reliable textual foundation. The integration of these approaches therefore represents the ideal methodological framework for tafsir studies, as it maintains a balance between textual authenticity and interpretive relevance.

This relationship can be observed in the historical development of Qur’anic exegesis, where classical tafsir was predominantly characterized by philological concerns, while contemporary tafsir increasingly incorporates contextual and hermeneutical perspectives. Accordingly, the integration of philology and hermeneutics within the framework of *qirā'ah al-nuṣūṣ* offers a comprehensive methodological paradigm capable of addressing the challenges of modern tafsir studies. By combining textual verification with contextual interpretation, this integrative approach contributes to the production of exegetical scholarship that is both academically rigorous and responsive to contemporary intellectual and social realities.

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