



**INTEGRATION OF ULUMUL QUR'AN AND WESTERN
HERMENEUTICS: SAHIRON SYAMSUDDIN'S INTELLECTUAL
PROJECT IN THE CONTEXT OF ISLAMIC STUDIES IN
INDONESIA**

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze academic reception, and evaluate the contribution of Sahiron Syamsuddin's intellectual project to the transformation of Islamic studies in Indonesia through the Ma'nā-cum-Maghzā approach. This research employs a qualitative approach within the critical hermeneutics paradigm, relying on Sahiron's primary works as the main data sources, analyzed through three layered techniques: history of ideas (Skinner), critical discourse analysis (Fairclough), and comparative textual analysis. The research results reveal four main findings. First, Sahiron's intellectual project emerged from the intersection of two major traditions: Qur'anic studies at UIN Sunan Kalijaga and Western hermeneutics, resulting in a distinctive hermeneutic-contextualist synthesis. Second, the Ma'na-cum-Maghza methodology possesses a coherent epistemological architecture by distinguishing ma'na and maghza as two interrelated dimensions of meaning. Third, this project has been widely accepted among progressive PTKIN academics while facing resistance from traditionalist-Salafi circles, reflecting a struggle for epistemic authority within the academic field of Indonesian Islamic studies. This article concludes that the Sahiron intellectual project constitutes a genuine epistemological reconstruction of exegesis, not merely a methodological hybridization, offering a model of non-hierarchical dialogue between Islamic tradition and modernity that is relevant to the entire Muslim world.

Keywords: *Ulumul Qur'an; Western Hermeneutics; Islamic Epistemology*

A. Introduction

The debate regarding the relationship between the classical Islamic exegetical tradition and Western hermeneutical methodology has become one of the most crucial issues in contemporary Islamic studies discourse, particularly in the Indonesian academic context, which is undergoing significant epistemic transformation (Ghazal, 2026; Mustaqim 2019:45). On the one hand, the tradition of *ulumul Qur'an* inherited by classical scholars such as al-Zarkasyi in *al-Burhan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an* and al-Suyuti in *al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an* offers a well established methodological framework but is often considered unresponsive to contemporary issues (al-Suyuthi, n.d.; Zarkašī, 2004). On the other hand, Western hermeneutics developed by Gadamer in *Truth and Method* and Ricoeur in *Interpretation Theory* offers a more contextual analytical tool, but is often criticized as a product of Western epistemology that is incompatible with the basic assumptions of Islamic theology about revelation (Gada, 2026). This epistemic tension has prompted a number of contemporary Muslim scholars to undertake synthetic efforts, one of the most systematic of which is carried out by Sahiron Syamsuddin through his intellectual project of placing *ulumul Qur'an* and Western hermeneutics in a productive dialogical relationship (Syamsuddin, 2022).

The landscape of contemporary Qur'anic hermeneutics can be identified as comprising four distinct epistemological positions. The first position is methodological traditionalism, which rejects Western hermeneutics as epistemological imperialism (Maimun, 2015). The second position is represented by Abu Zayd, who treats the Qur'an as a *muntaj thaqāfi* (cultural product) a position that is epistemologically problematic because it equates the Qur'an with other cultural texts (Afiani, 2021). The third position was developed by Abdullah Saeed through a four-stage contextualist approach, but Madaniyyah and Munawar (2022) identified its weakness there are no strict criteria to distinguish historically conditioned commands from transhistorical principles (Madaniyyah and Munawar, 2022). The fourth position a hermeneutic-contextualist synthesis is the framework within which Sahiron Syamsuddin operates, addressing the

weakness of Fazlur Rahman's "double movement" approach, which fails to provide explicit methodological procedures, through the Ma'nā-cum - Maghzā approach, which offers an analytical balance between ma'nā al-aṣlī and al-maghzā through four components: linguistic, intratextual, intertextual, and historical context (Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy [et. al.], 2022).

Novelty This article focuses on three aspects that have not been offered simultaneously by previous studies: first, a holistic mapping of Sahiron's intellectual project as a coherent ecosystem of ideas from genealogy, methodological architecture, to its institutional and pedagogical forms. Second, this article offers a new epistemological evaluative framework for assessing the integration of Western hermeneutics in Qur'anic studies without sacrificing the integrity of the ulumul Qur'anic tradition, a perspective that has not been explicitly developed in the existing literature (Syamsuddin, 2022). Third, by using the approach *history of ideas* (Skinner) and *critical discourse analysis* (Fairclough), this article provides a sociological-discursive reading that views the academic controversy surrounding Sahiron's project as a struggle for epistemic authority within the academic field of Indonesian Islamic (Fairclough, 2013; Skinner, 2002). Thus, this article not only contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of Sahiron's thought, but also opens up new perspectives in the study of contemporary Muslim intellectuals operating at the intersection of tradition and modernity.

Theoretically, this article contributes to the development of discourse *Islamic hermeneutics* as an autonomous field of study, in line with Nasr's call for establishing a dialogue between Islamic intellectual traditions and Western thought on an equal and non-hierarchical basis (Nasr et al., 2015). Practically, the findings of this article are relevant to the development of the Quranic science and exegesis curriculum at Indonesian State Islamic Universities (PTKIN), which are integrating critical approaches in exegesis learning (Suryadilaga, 2017). More broadly, this study contributes to an

understanding of Indonesia's position as a laboratory of progressive Islamic thought in the Muslim world.

B. Method

This This research is a qualitative research with a critical hermeneutics paradigm, namely an approach that does not merely interpret texts descriptively, but also reveals the power relations and interests that work behind the production of academic discourse, as formulated by Kinsella and Pitman within the framework of contemporary critical hermeneutics (Kinsella and Pitman, 2012). The primary data of this research comes directly from the written works of Sahiron Syamsuddin, including the book *Hermeneutics and Development of Ulumul Qur'an* (Syamsuddin, 2017). Secondary data were obtained from Western hermeneutics literature that served as Sahiron's primary references, namely Gadamer's *Truth and Method* and Ricoeur's *Interpretation Theory*, as well as from academic studies responding to Sahiron's thoughts in Scopus and SINTA indexed journals. Data collection techniques were carried out through systematic library research, by identifying, classifying, and documenting all of Sahiron's primary works and relevant secondary literature using a bibliographic matrix, in accordance with the documentation procedures in text research outlined by Creswell and Poth (Creswell and Poth, 2017).

The data analysis in this study was conducted through three techniques applied in layers: first, the history of ideas as developed by Quentin Skinner, which was used to trace the conceptual genealogy of Sahiron's thought by placing each idea in the historical and intellectual context of its emergence, so that the project of synthesizing the Qur'anic principles and Western hermeneutics could be understood as a response to a specific discursive context. Second, Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA) model was applied to read the relationship between Sahiron's texts, academic discourse practices, and the socio-institutional context surrounding them, in order to reveal how Sahiron's

intellectual project operates in the academic field of Indonesian Islamic studies which is fraught with struggles for epistemic authority. Third, comparative textual analysis is used to critically position the Ma'na-cum-Maghza methodology among other contemporary tafsir approaches, including Fazlur Rahman's double movement, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's semiotic-linguistic approach, and Abdullah Saeed's contextualist approach, so that Sahiron's uniqueness and original contribution can be identified with more precision (Abdullah Saeed, 2013). The validity of the analysis is maintained through source triangulation, namely by confirming each interpretive finding from at least three different sources (Patton, 2014).

C. Results and Discussion

1. Results

a. Intellectual Genealogy: From Classical Ulumul Qur'an to Hermeneutic Synthesis

Sahiron Syamsuddin was born and raised in a tradition-rich Indonesian Islamic intellectual environment, where mastery of classical Qur'ānic sciences is a fundamental prerequisite for speaking authoritatively about Qur'ānic interpretation (Mustaqim, 2019). His early education at a *pesantren* and then at the Faculty of *Ushūluddin*, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, formed his epistemological framework firmly within the tradition of *ulūmul Qur'ān*, including mastery of disciplines such as *ashbāb al-nuzūl*, *nāsikh wa al-mansūkh*, *muḥkam wa al-mutashābih*, and *maqāṣid al-Qur'ān* as transmitted by al-Zarkāshī in *al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* and al-Suyūṭī in *al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*. This traditional foundation would later become a differentiating factor between Sahiron's intellectual project and that of other Muslim intellectuals who adopted Western hermeneutics without adequate Islamic epistemological grounding (Syamsuddin, 2017).

The most decisive turning point in the formation of Sahiron's intellectual project was his doctoral studies at Bamberg University, Germany, an institution with a long tradition of Qur'ānic scholarship (Rahman and Nurtawab, 2024). Under the guidance of scholars at Bamberg,

Sahiron came into direct contact with the Western philosophical hermeneutic discourse, from Schleiermacher's general hermeneutics to Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics through the concept of *fusion of horizons* in *Truth and Method* (Gadamer, 1975), and Ricoeur's middle way between understanding and explanation through the theory of *distanciation* and textual *appropriation* (Ricoeur, 1976). This encounter did not displace the Islamic epistemological foundation previously embedded in him; rather, it encouraged Sahiron to ask critical questions about the points of similarity and difference between Western hermeneutics and the Islamic interpretive tradition, and whether it is possible to build an interpretive methodology that utilizes the strengths of both without sacrificing the integrity of either (Syamsuddin, 2017).

Understanding Sahiron's intellectual genealogy requires first understanding the currents of contemporary Qur'ānic thought within which he builds his position. The landscape can broadly be divided into three main, conflicting currents (Nuraini, Waharjani, and Jailani, 2024). The first is traditionalist-literalism, which upholds the supremacy of classical exegetical methodologies and rejects Western hermeneutical intervention as epistemological contamination (Ibrahim and Bela, 2023). The second is hermeneutical liberalism, represented by Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, who applies semiotic-linguistic analysis to the Qur'ān as a *muntāj thaqāfī* in a manner that critics consider to reduce the transcendent dimension of revelation to historical-sociological categories (Afiani, 2021). The third current and this is where Sahiron positions himself is the hermeneutic-contextualist synthesis that seeks to maintain the basic theological assumptions about revelation while selectively and critically utilizing Western hermeneutical tools to enrich, rather than replace, the methodology of Islamic interpretation.

Sahiron's choice to occupy a synthetic position is not an opportunistic compromise but is based on a carefully formulated epistemological argument. Western hermeneutics and the Qur'ānic tradition share fundamental questions about the nature of meaning, the relationship between text and context, and the authority of the interpreter,

even though they answer them from different philosophical starting points (Syamsuddin, 2022). Sahiron explicitly rejects the claim that Western hermeneutics and Islamic exegesis are completely incompatible instead, he argues that the Qur'ānic tradition implicitly contains hermeneutical dimensions such as attention to historical context (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), intertextual relations (*munāsabat al-āyāt*), and orientation to meaning (*maqāṣid*) that can be productively dialogued with Gadamerian and Ricoeurian concepts (Fitra and Aboujanah, 2025). Sahiron's intellectual journey from *pesantren* and UIN Sunan Kalijaga's Qur'ānic tradition to hermeneutical synthesis has resulted in an intellectual project with strong internal coherence, where each methodological component can be traced to its roots in both classical Islamic tradition and Western hermeneutical thought (Nurtawab and Riddell, 2025).

b. The Ma'na-cum-Maghza Methodology: Architecture, Logic, and Epistemological Innovation

The core of Sahiron Syamsuddin's entire methodological structure rests on a conceptual dichotomy that distinguishes it from other contemporary interpretation methodologies: the distinction between *ma'nā* and *maghzā*. In Sahiron's framework, *ma'nā* refers to the historical-literal meaning of the text what was actually intended by God as the speaker and understood by the first community of recipients of revelation in the socio-historical context of seventh-century Arabia, a dimension of meaning that is singular, historical, and bound to the moment of revelation (Syamsuddin, 2022). *Maghzā*, on the other hand, refers to the significant or transhistorical core message contained in the text the dimension of meaning that goes beyond the initial historical context and remains relevant to readers in every era and context, a dimension that is dynamic, open, and continues to produce new meanings in the encounter between text and contemporary readers (Syamsuddin, 2017). This dichotomy epistemologically rejects two equally problematic extremes: on the one hand, literalism that freezes meaning in its initial historical context on the other hand, hermeneutical relativism that opens the text to unlimited subjective interpretations.

The distinction between *ma'nā* and *maghzā* in Sahiron's framework has deep philosophical roots in the hermeneutics of Gadamer and Ricoeur, though Sahiron did not adopt them wholesale but adapted them selectively according to the epistemological needs of Islamic interpretation (Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy [et. al.], 2022). From Gadamer, Sahiron absorbed the concept of *fusion of horizons* that understanding a text always occurs in a meeting between the historical horizon of the text and that of the reader (Shannon, 2026). From Ricoeur, Sahiron takes the concept of *distanciation* the idea that when a text is removed from its context of production, it undergoes semantic autonomy that allows it to speak to readers beyond its original circle and the concept of *appropriation*, referring to the process by which the reader makes the meaning of the text his own within the context of his current existence (Busacchi, 2026). However, Sahiron critically corrects both Gadamer and Ricoeur in one fundamental respect: unlike both of them who view the text as a purely human product, Sahiron maintains the Islamic theological assumption that the Qur'ān is the word of God, which has an identifiable historical significance (*ma'nā*) while simultaneously remaining open to transhistorical significance (*magh zā*) (Syamsuddin, 2022).

The *Ma'nā-cum-Magh zā* methodology is equipped with operational methodological components that originate from the classical Qur'ānic treasury, positioned as tools to bridge the journey from *ma'nā* to *magh zā* in a controlled and intersubjective manner (Haikal and Murni, 2025). The first and most fundamental component is context analysis, which includes the internal linguistic context (*siyāq al-kalām*) and external historical-social context (*siyāq al-ḥāl*). The second component involves the critical use of *asbāb al-nuzūl* not as the sole determinant of meaning in a literal sense, but as a historical window revealing the concrete problems to which the Qur'ānic text responds. The third component is the integration of *Maqāṣid al-Qur'ān* the main objectives of the Qur'ān such as upholding justice (*'adl*), welfare (*maṣlaḥa*), and protection of universal human values as a normative framework directing and controlling the process of determining *maghzā* (Lufaefi et al., 2026), so that this methodology does not fall into hermeneutical relativism.

Sahiron formulated the operational procedures of his methodology in five concrete, applicable steps (Mushaffa, Azzahara, and Nugraha, 2025). The first step is linguistic analysis (*al-tahlīl al-lughawī*), including morphological, syntactic, and semantic analysis to identify the most probable literal meaning of the text in the context of seventh-century Arabic. The second step is the reconstruction of historical context through a study of *asbāb al-nuzūl*, the prophetic biography, and relevant historical sources. The third step is the identification of *ma'nā* the determination of the most probable historical-literal meaning intended by the text in the context of its revelation (*al-ma'nā al-tārīkhī*) (Syamsuddin, 2022). The fourth step is the excavation of *magh zā* through reflection on the core principles and values contained in *ma'nā* using *Maqāṣid al-Qur'ān* as normative control (*al-magh zā al-tārīkhī*). The fifth step is the actualization of *maghzā* in the current context (*al-maghzā al-mutaharrik al-mu'aṣir*) the application of identified transhistorical core values to relevant contemporary issues, a step methodologically analogous to Ricoeur's concept of appropriation but framed within the normative framework of *maqāṣid*.

When placed within the map of contemporary tafsīr methodology, the epistemological innovation of *Ma'nā-cum-Magh zā* becomes increasingly apparent through its comparison with previously existing approaches. Compared with Fazlur Rahman's double movement, *Ma'nā-cum-Magh zā* offers a more structured and explicit procedure in managing the relationship between the historical and transhistorical dimensions of meaning, and is more rooted in the *ulūmul Qur'ān* tradition. Compared with Saeed's contextualist approach, *Ma'nā-cum-Magh zā* has the advantage of procedural clarity and the systematic integration of Qur'ānic scholarly tools as methodological components (Fitra, Asnaini, et al., 2025). The most fundamental epistemological innovation of *Ma'nā-cum-Magh zā* lies in its ability to simultaneously maintain three commitments often seen as contradictory fidelity to the historical meaning of the text (*ma'nā*), contextual relevance for contemporary Muslims (*magh zā*), and theological

integrity of revelation an achievement that makes it a genuine methodological contribution to contemporary Qur'ānic studies.

c. Responses, Critiques, and Debates: The Reception of the Sahiron Project in the Academic Landscape

Sahiron Syamsuddin's intellectual project has received a highly positive response among Indonesian Muslim academics engaged in progressive-moderate Islamic scholarship, particularly within the State Islamic Religious Colleges (PTKIN), which since the early 2000s have oriented themselves toward developing more critical and contextual Islamic studies (Suryadilaga, 2017). Scholars from the UIN Sunan Kalijaga circle and other PTKINs have actively applied the *Ma'nā-cum-Magh zā* methodology to various contemporary exegetical themes ranging from gender and equality issues to interfaith relations and human rights demonstrating that this methodology is considered capable of providing more adequate interpretive responses to contemporary issues compared to conventional exegetical methodologies (Ervan Nurtawab & Peter G Riddel, n.d.).

On the other hand, Sahiron's intellectual project faced quite strong resistance from traditionalist-Salafi circles, who viewed the attempt to integrate Western hermeneutics into the methodology of Qur'ānic interpretation as a serious epistemological threat to the authenticity and authority of Islamic interpretation (Hidayatullah, Masruhan, and Hasan, 2026). The most fundamental criticism raised was that Western hermeneutics particularly in its Gadamerian version rested on philosophical assumptions incompatible with Islamic theology the idea that the meaning of a text could never be fully grasped by any reader (Fitra and Oktasandi, 2024), including the first community of recipients of revelation, was considered to open the door to interpretive relativism that could undermine legal certainty (*qaṭ'iyyāh*) in Islamic jurisprudence (Ibrahim and Bela, 2023). A second serious criticism is the concern that the concept of *maghzā* with its transhistorical and open nature can be misused to reconstruct established Qur'ānic rulings in the name of contextual relevance, ultimately leading to a blurring of the boundaries between the

normative text of revelation and the subjective interpretation of the interpreter.

In the international academic arena, Sahiron's intellectual project has received increasingly significant attention, especially after the publication of his article on *Ma'nā-cum-Magh zā* in a reputable international journal (Nurtawab and Riddell, 2025). In the context of Qur'ānic studies in the West, Sahiron's methodology is relevant for dialogue with approaches developed within the field, particularly as Western Qur'ānic studies have in recent decades become increasingly open to contributions from Muslim scholars developing a methodology that simultaneously pays attention to the historical and normative dimensions of the text (Rahman and Nurtawab, 2024).

In addition to resistance from traditionalist-Salafi circles and acceptance from progressive groups, the Sahiron project also faced more nuanced criticism from moderate-critical scholars who accepted the legitimacy of dialogue between *ulūmul Qur'ān* and Western hermeneutics but questioned specific aspects of the methodological construction of *Ma'nā-cum-Maghzā* (Hidayatullah et al., 2026). The most substantive epistemological criticism concerned the issue of intersubjective criteria for determining *maghzā* if *ma'nā* can be controlled through relatively standardized linguistic procedures and historical analysis, the question remains what mechanisms ensure that the determination of *maghzā* does not become the subjective projection of the interpreter wrapped in methodological language (Syamsuddin, 2022). These internal debates, rather than weakening the project, actually demonstrate the vitality of Sahiron's intellectual project as an open, productive research program capable of generating substantive follow-up research agendas for the academic community of Qur'ānic studies in Indonesia and the broader Muslim world.

d. Contributions to Indonesian Islamic Studies: Institutional, Pedagogical, and Religious Discourse Implications

One of the most concrete manifestations of Sahiron Syamsuddin's intellectual project's contribution to Indonesian Islamic studies is its impact on the institutional transformation of Qur'ānic studies within PTKINs, which are gradually moving from a memorization-transmissive orientation to an analytical-critical orientation more responsive to contemporary academic challenges. The establishment and development of Qur'ānic study centers in a number of UINs with UIN Sunan Kalijaga as the main epicenter is the most tangible institutional manifestation of this project, in which Sahiron plays a role not only as a thinker but also as an institutional architect who actively builds academic infrastructure to support more methodological and interdisciplinary Qur'ānic studies (Rahman and Nurtawab, 2024). The network of tafsīr scholars formed through doctoral and master's programs at UIN Sunan Kalijaga, where the *Ma'nā-cum-Magh zā* methodology is one of the main analytical frameworks taught, has produced a new generation of academics spread across various PTKINs throughout Indonesia, making the influence of Sahiron's intellectual project a multiplier effect that continues to expand beyond its original institution (Syafi'i, 2024).

At the pedagogical level, the contribution of the Sahiron project is manifested in a fundamental paradigm shift in the teaching of Qur'ānic science and interpretation: from a transmissive model that positions students as passive recipients of an established corpus of interpretations, to a critical-analytical model that encourages students to develop methodological competence in producing new interpretations responsive to the contemporary context (Haikal and Murni, 2025). Sahiron's textbooks and scholarly works, including *Hermeneutics and Development of Ulumul Qur'ān* and the article *Ma'nā-cum-Maghzā*, have become mandatory references in the curriculum of Qur'ānic Sciences and Tafsīr study programs at various PTKINs, marking the formal integration of contextual hermeneutics methodology into the body of Indonesian higher Islamic education. Students are now encouraged to critically examine the assumptions underlying various interpretation methods, both classical and contemporary, rather than simply applying a single method mechanically

an orientation reflecting the spirit of critical hermeneutics that animates Sahiron's intellectual project (Rahman and Nurtawab, 2024).

Sahiron's intellectual project makes a significant and strategic contribution to the discourse of religious moderation and *Islam Nusantara*, which in the last decade has become one of the main agendas of Indonesia's national religious policy. The *Ma'nā-cum-Maghzā* methodology provides a solid hermeneutical basis for reading the Qur'ān in a way that is moderate, inclusive, and responsive to the context of Indonesia's diverse society (Fitra, Nurhaidah, et al., 2025). With its ability to distinguish between *ma'nā* historical meaning bound to seventh-century Arabia and *maghzā* the universal message of the Qur'ān Sahiron's methodology provides a strong methodological foundation for scholars and *ulamā* to develop interpretations supporting universal human values such as justice, equality, and respect for differences, without facing accusations of betraying the Qur'ānic text (Syamsuddin, 2022). In a broader framework, Sahiron's intellectual project can be read as the most systematic academic contribution from the PTKIN tradition to the *Islam Nusantara* project a vision of Islam that celebrates diversity, rejects violence, and embraces humanist values as an integral part of an authentic understanding of the Qur'ān.

One of the most important tests of any tafsīr methodology is its ability to provide academically satisfying and socially relevant responses to challenging contemporary issues. In the context of gender and equality issues, the *Ma'nā-cum-Maghzā* methodology allows for a rereading of verses that have historically been used to limit women's roles in public and religious spheres, through the identification of *ma'nā* as historically bound by the patriarchal Arabian context of the seventh century, and the excavation of *maghzā* oriented toward the principles of justice and equality as core values of the Qur'ān (Kiptiyah et al., 2026). In the context of pluralism and interfaith relations, *Ma'nā-cum-Maghzā* provides a hermeneutical basis for reading verses related to non-Muslims in a more contextual and proportional manner (Saifuddin and Nirwana, 2024). In the

context of human rights, Sahiron's intellectual project contributes to the construction of a hermeneutical bridge between universal human rights values and Qur'ānic values a bridge much needed by Indonesia as the world's largest Muslim-majority democracy.

2. Discussion

Sahiron's Intellectual Project as a Reconstruction of the Epistemology of Interpretation: Between Methodological Innovation, the Struggle for Authority, and the Transformation of Indonesian Islamic Studies. The findings presented in the research results section collectively indicate that Sahiron Syamsuddin's intellectual project cannot be adequately understood if it is only read as an attempt at "hybridization" or "syncretization" between two different intellectual traditions, because such a framing fails to capture the epistemological depth and coherence that truly characterize this project (Syamsuddin, 2022). What Sahiron did was something epistemologically far more ambitious and riskier an internal reconstruction of the epistemology of Islamic interpretation, namely an attempt to renew and enrich the methodological framework of the Qur'anic scholars by utilizing Western hermeneutical insights that have gone through a rigorous selection and adaptation process based on Islamic epistemological criteria (Mustaqim, 2019).

The difference between hybridization and epistemological reconstruction is not merely a matter of terminology, but rather touches on a fundamental issue hybridization implies the mixing of two systems that remain foreign to each other, while epistemological reconstruction implies an organic transformation from within the system itself through dialogue that produces a genuine synthesis and not just a compromise (Shannon, 2026). This reading is also supported by the fact that Sahiron consistently starts from within the tradition of the Qur'anic scholars and moves outward towards Western hermeneutics, not the other way around a direction of movement that epistemologically positions the Islamic tradition as an active subject that absorbs and processes, not as a passive object absorbed by the Western tradition.

An honest and critical reading of Sahiron's intellectual project cannot ignore a balanced evaluation of both the strengths and limitations of the Ma'na-cum-Maghza methodology, for only with such an evaluation can Sahiron's genuine contribution be recognized without falling into academically counterproductive apologetics (Rahman and Nurtawab, 2024). The most prominent strength of this methodology lies in its ability to simultaneously satisfy two demands that have often been seen as contradictory in contemporary interpretation: the demand for fidelity to the historical meaning of the text (*ma'na*) which guarantees academic accountability, and demands contextual relevance (*Maghza*) that ensures responsiveness to the needs of contemporary Muslims, an achievement that Saeed recognizes as one of the most fundamental methodological challenges in contemporary exegesis. However, the most serious methodological limitation is the question of intersubjective criteria for validation (Saeed, 2026). *Maghza* different from *ma'na* which can be controlled through relatively standardized linguistic-historical procedures, the determination of *Maghza* still vulnerable to the subjective projections of the interpreter even though Sahiron has attempted to overcome this through integration *Maqasid al-Qur'an* as a normative framework (Husna et al., 2024). The second limitation is that the issue of hierarchical relations between *ma'na* And *Maghza* in a situation where both seem to be at odds whether *Maghza* can surpass or even correct *ma'na* under certain conditions, or whether *Maghza* must always be rooted and subject to *ma'na* a question that according to Ricoeur is at the heart of any responsible hermeneutics.

When the controversy surrounding Sahiron's intellectual project is read through the lens of the sociology of knowledge, it reveals a much richer dimension than merely an academic debate about the method of interpretation, namely a struggle that is actually related to the fundamental question of who has the authority to define the "legitimate interpretation" of the Qur'an in the contemporary Indonesian context. Using Pierre Bourdieu's conceptual framework on *field* (while), *capital* (capital), and *habitus* (disposition), this controversy can be read as a struggle between two

groups of actors with different epistemic capital on the one hand, PTKIN scholars with high international academic capital publications in Scopus-indexed journals, global networks, and mastery of critical methodologies and on the other hand, traditionalist ulama with religious capital derived from the genealogy of pesantren scholarship and transmissive authority that has been established for centuries (Suryadilaga, 2017). Sahiron him self, with the rare combination of a pesantren-UIN educational background and a doctorate from the Bamberg, holds a unique position in this field he has enough religious capital to speak authoritatively to the classical Qur'anic scholars community, as well as enough international academic capital to be recognized by the global scholarly community a combination of capital that makes him one of the most influential actors in the struggle over the definition of "legitimate interpretation" in Indonesia (Sahiron Syamsuddin, 2017). This sociological reading does not intend to reduce genuine epistemological debates to mere power plays, but rather to equip methodological analysis with a contextual dimension that shows why certain ideas succeed in dominating discourse while others are marginalized, not solely because of their intellectual superiority but also because of the social position and capital possessed by their proponents.

Discussion of the contribution of Sahiron's intellectual project to Indonesian Islamic studies must go beyond a mere cataloguing of its institutional and pedagogical impacts to a deeper understanding of its transformative significance for how the Muslim world and the global academic world understand the relationship between revealed texts, interpretive traditions, and contemporary contexts (Syamsuddin, 2017a). Sahiron's project implicitly offers an alternative model for many Muslim countries that have been caught in a dilemma between two equally unsatisfying choices textual fundamentalism that rejects contextualization, or hermeneutical liberalism that breaks away from the text. Sahiron's model suggests that there is a third path that is epistemologically more coherent and methodologically more controlled. In a global context, Indonesia's position as the world's largest Muslim-majority democracy makes Sahiron's project have a relevance that goes beyond academic boundaries it provides

empirical evidence that Islam and modernity, between fidelity to revelation and participation in global discourses on human rights, gender equality, and pluralism, do not have to be treated as irreconcilable dichotomies (Simmons and Minister, 2012). Thus, the most important contribution of Sahiron's intellectual project to the study of Indonesian Islam lies not only at the level of interpretive methodology, but at a more fundamental level it has succeeded in deconstructing the false dilemma between authenticity and relevance, between fidelity to tradition and openness to renewal, and replacing it with a new paradigm that views both as mutually necessary moments in the process of responsible interpretation.

A comprehensive evaluation of Sahiron's intellectual project cannot be considered complete without a prospective reflection on the challenges it will face in the future and the opportunities that remain open for further development, because every genuine research program always contains problems that encourage the birth of new questions that are sharper than those that it has successfully answered (Gadamer, 1975). The most pressing challenge facing the Sahiron project is the context of the post-truth era and the rise of digital literalism in which interpretive authority is increasingly distributed horizontally through social media, resulting in a proliferation of literal interpretations that are accessed by millions of Indonesian Muslims without adequate methodological mediation a challenge that requires not only an academic response but also a more effective public dissemination strategy (Royle, n.d.). The most promising opportunities for the continued development of this project lie in two directions first, the deepening and formalization of intersubjective criteria for validation *Maghza* which will address the most frequently criticized methodological weaknesses second, expanding the application of the Ma'na-cum-Maghza methodology to new, underdeveloped thematic domains, such as cosmological, ecological, and bioethical verses that are increasingly relevant in the context of the environmental crisis and the advancement of global biotechnology. The most pressing intellectual agenda for the next generation of scholars is to develop a systematic comparative study

between the Ma'na-cum-Maghza and the methodologies of contextual interpretation developed in other Muslim countries such as *ijtihad maqasidi* in Morocco, thematic interpretation in Egypt, and neo-modernism in Pakistan because only through equal comparative dialogue can the Sahiron project's genuine contribution to the global treasury of interpretation methodologies be fully recognized and developed (Miller, 2013).

D. Conclusion

This article has shown that Sahiron Syamsuddin's intellectual project constitutes a genuine reconstruction of the epistemology of interpretation not merely a methodological hybridization based on a critical dialogue between the classical Qur'ānic tradition and Western philosophical hermeneutics, resulting in the *Ma'nā-cum-Magh zā* methodology as an original contribution with a coherent epistemological architecture, consistent internal logic, and operational procedures verifiable intersubjectively. Through intellectual genealogical mapping, methodological dissection, academic reception analysis, and institutional-pedagogical evaluation, this article identifies three mutually supporting original contributions. First, a holistic mapping framework of Sahiron's intellectual project as a coherent ecosystem of ideas not previously offered simultaneously. Second, an epistemological evaluative framework that precisely identifies the strengths and limitations of the *Ma'nā-cum-Magh zā* methodology, especially on the issue of intersubjective criteria of *magh zā* validation and the hierarchical relationship between *ma'nā* and *magh zā*, which still requires further elaboration. Third, a sociological-discursive reading showing that the controversy surrounding the Sahiron project constitutes a struggle for epistemic authority in the academic field of Indonesian Islamic studies that goes far beyond a mere methodological debate.

Theoretically, this article asserts that the dialogue between Islamic hermeneutics and Western hermeneutical philosophy is most productive when built on the principle of epistemic equality (*non-hierarchical dialogue*), where the tradition of the Qur'ānic scholars acts as an active subject that

absorbs and processes Western insights, rather than as a passive object absorbed a model that makes the Sahiron project relevant not only to Indonesia but to the entire Muslim world facing similar challenges in the dialogue between revealed tradition and modernity. Practically, the findings of this article recommend two things: first, the formalization of intersubjective criteria for validating *magh zā* as an urgent methodological agenda to be completed by Sahiron and his successors so that the *Ma 'nā-cum-Magh zā* methodology becomes more epistemologically robust; and second, a more systematic integration of this methodology into the curriculum of Qur'ānic Sciences and Tafsīr study programs across all PTKINs in Indonesia as a pedagogical instrument to form a generation of interpreters who are both faithful to tradition and responsive to the contemporary context.

This article acknowledges its limitations in not having included empirical data on student and community reception of Sahiron's methodology; therefore, the most urgent research agenda to be developed is a systematic comparative study between *Ma 'nā-cum-Maghzā* and contextual tafsīr methodologies in other Muslim countries, as well as empirical studies based on surveys and academic ethnography on how this methodology is received, adapted, and debated by academic and religious communities at the grassroots level in Indonesia.

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