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# Textuality and Intertextuality in Contemporary Qur'anic Exegesis: A Comparative Study of Nasr Hāmid Abū Zayd and Angelika Neuwirth

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**ABSTRACT**

*Contemporary Qur'anic scholarship has developed influential accounts of textuality and intertextuality, yet the studies reviewed here usually examine these approaches separately. Their different treatments of textual coherence, historical communication, and present-day relevance require a comparison that specifies how methodological integration could work. This study compares Nasr Hāmid Abū Zayd and Angelika Neuwirth to formulate a conceptual framework for contemporary Qur'anic interpretation. A qualitative literature study uses a history-of-ideas perspective and structured comparative analysis. Primary writings and selected secondary studies are examined through five indicators: textual concepts, historical context, interpretive units, intertextual relations, and contemporary contextualization. A shared Maryam passage illustrates the proposed sequence. The comparison identifies a shared commitment to historically situated language but different explanatory priorities. Abū Zayd distinguishes historical meaning from renewed significance, whereas Neuwirth connects surah composition, oral communication, and late antique interlocutors. These are overlapping emphases rather than mutually exclusive methods. Their integration requires linguistic and surah analysis, historically controlled comparison with related texts, and an explicit justification of contemporary significance. The contribution is a staged framework that distinguishes textual evidence, historical hypotheses, and normative inference. Its Maryam illustration clarifies the procedure without validating a complete exegetical model; systematic application to further passages remains necessary.*

## INTRODUCTION

Debates over language, history, and contemporary relevance have shaped modern Qur'anic exegesis. One influential strand developed through the reformist commentary of Muhammad 'Abduh and Muhammad Rashīd Riḍā, who sought to connect interpretation with the concerns of their readers ('Abduh & Riḍā, 1947; Hakim, 2023a, 2023b; Mawardi, 2018). Jansen describes modern Egyptian interpretation through philological, social, and scientific interests (Jansen, 1997). Ahmad Mustāfā al-Marāghī also belongs to this broader discussion of exegetical renewal (Hakim, 2022). Later commentaries, including those examined in studies of Wahbah al-Zuḥailī, illustrate the continuing



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negotiation between inherited interpretive resources and modern questions (Hakim, 2023a, 2023b). These examples establish an intellectual setting for the present comparison rather than an exhaustive classification of contemporary tafsīr.

A related strand concentrates on interpretive principles rather than continuous commentary on the entire Qur'an. Fazlur Rahman's double movement, for example, connects the historical setting of revelation with contemporary ethical questions (Garwan, 2020). Discussions of reformist interpretation also include Amina Wadud's thematic engagement with gender (Kurzman, 1998) and Abdullah Saeed's contextual approach (Ridwan, 2016). Such projects show why linguistic understanding, historical reconstruction, and contemporary application must be related explicitly. They do not, however, eliminate the need to examine how each interpreter defines the text and justifies the movement between these different tasks.

Amīn al-Khūlī's literary approach provides a further point of reference. As reconstructed by Setiawan and by Hakim and Kholid, it combines attention to the circumstances surrounding the text with analysis of its internal linguistic and rhetorical organization (Hakim & Kholid, 2022; Setiawan, 2006). The works of Muhammad Aḥmad Khalaf Allāh and 'Ā'ishah 'Abd al-Raḥmān Bint al-Shāṭi' illustrate the importance of literary questions within this tradition (Hakim & Kholid, 2022). Abū Zayd subsequently developed a distinct account of textuality in dialogue with literary criticism and the Islamic interpretive heritage (Rosa, 2015). His engagement with this intellectual current developed through methodological influence and critical appropriation.

These orientations overlap. Literary interpretation can address contemporary questions, and contextual interpretation depends on linguistic evidence (Hakim, 2023a, 2023b; Kurzman, 1998; Saeed, 2014). Neuwirth's work likewise connects close reading with historical context, but gives particular attention to surah composition, oral proclamation, and dialogue with traditions circulating in Late Antiquity. A useful comparison must therefore examine different interpretive priorities without assigning textual analysis exclusively to Abū Zayd or intertextuality exclusively to Neuwirth.

Abū Zayd did not give his interpretive approach a single fixed name. Studies describe it as Quranic hermeneutics, Quranic textuality, or a theory of interpretation. This article uses the term Quranic textuality to distinguish the approach from a narrowly literal understanding of the text. Abū Zayd and Neuwirth are selected because they offer a focused comparison between two historically attentive approaches with different explanatory priorities. Abū Zayd's account connects the linguistic and cultural conditions of meaning with the significance sought by later readers. Neuwirth's work connects the literary organization of the Qur'an with the communication through which an early community took shape. Comparing these projects is useful because both resist reading verses in isolation, while approaching the relationship between historical understanding and contemporary interpretation differently. Their religious affiliations and public reception are not used as measures of methodological validity.

The earlier literature reviewed here establishes important parts of this comparison. Dozan, Kholid, and Lutfi examine Abū Zayd's hermeneutics, interpretive procedures, and applications (Dozan, 2017; Kholid, 2014; Lutfi, 2018). Fikriyati and Fina explain Neuwirth's pre-canonical reading, the surah as an interpretive unit, and intertextual relations (Fikriyati, 2015; Fina, 2014). These studies clarify each scholar's vocabulary and procedures, but the works considered here do not supply the five-indicator comparison and staged integration developed below. The gap is thus specified within the reviewed corpus, without claiming that no previous comparison exists anywhere in the field.

Recent research sharpens the problem. López-Farjeat examines Abū Zayd's engagement with classical theological and philosophical resources, while Moch reassesses his treatment of abrogation

(López-Farjeat, 2024; Moch, 2022). El-Refaee questions the criteria that connect contextual interpretation to claims of objective justice in inheritance (El-Refaee, 2024). For Neuwirth, Zubaidi and colleagues revisit the historical and intertextual treatment of Abraham (Zubaidi et al., 2025), while Ahmad's analysis of Quran 79 combines surah structure and intertextual relations and disputes a proposed redactional division (Ahmad, 2025). These contributions show why the comparison must include methodological limits and competing readings, rather than assume that historicity or intertextuality guarantees an interpretation's validity.

What remains to be specified in this comparison is how textual concepts, historical context, interpretive units, textual relations, and contemporary contextualization can be related within one transparent procedure. The novelty proposed here lies in organizing these five indicators into a comparative matrix and then separating the stages and evidential requirements of integration. This is a conceptual contribution within the literature reviewed, not a claim to establish a universally superior method of tafsīr. The study asks three questions: How do Abū Zayd and Neuwirth conceptualize the Qur'anic text and its historical communication? How do their interpretive units, uses of textual relations, and approaches to contemporary relevance converge and differ? What sequence could integrate their complementary insights while keeping textual evidence, historical reconstruction, and normative inference distinguishable? Its contribution is a comparative matrix and a provisional interpretive framework illustrated through the Maryam narrative.

## METHODS

This is a qualitative literature study using a history-of-ideas perspective and structured comparative analysis (Mustaqim, 2010). The history-of-ideas perspective situates interpretive concepts within the intellectual problems to which they respond; the comparative method then examines both scholars through the same analytical questions. This combination is appropriate because the research concerns the construction and possible integration of interpretive methods. The unit of analysis is an argument about interpretation, rather than a biographical event or the frequency with which a term occurs.

The primary analytical anchors are Abū Zayd's Naqd al-Khiṭāb al-Dīnī (1994) and Neuwirth's Qur'an and History A Disputed Relationship (2003) and Two Faces of the Qur'ān (2010). They are selected because they address religious discourse, historical understanding, and the relation between proclamation and the received corpus. The cited books and articles on each scholar provide secondary reconstructions and critical evaluations. Selection is purposive: an item must identify its author and publication, address a concept or procedure relevant to the comparison, and supply an argument that can be connected to the analytical indicators. General biographical material is used only when it explains an intellectual position. This is a focused conceptual review rather than an exhaustive survey of the literature.

The analysis proceeds in four stages. First, it reconstructs each approach separately, distinguishing a scholar's own claims from the explanations offered by later studies. Second, it compares the reconstructed arguments through five common indicators: the concept of the text; historical context; the unit of interpretation; relations within the Qur'an and with other traditions; and the justification of contemporary significance. Third, it relates convergences and differences to the comparative matrix in Table 1. Fourth, it formulates an integrative sequence and uses Quran 19:16–40, in relation to Quran 3:33–62, as a shared conceptual illustration. This illustration applies the analytical questions to the same theme; it does not attribute an identical Maryam interpretation to both scholars. The evidential test is whether a comparative claim can be connected to a defined concept, passage, or argument in the cited material. Primary arguments take precedence over

generalized summaries, while disagreements and dependence on secondary reconstructions remain visible. Linguistic observations, historical hypotheses, and contemporary normative inferences are evaluated as different kinds of claims. The synthesis is consequently assessed for conceptual coherence and transparency. Its interpretive effectiveness and the historical availability of particular intertexts remain questions for a fuller application to primary materials.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

### Quranic textuality in Nasr Hāmid Abū Zayd

### Intellectual formation and hermeneutical orientation

Abū Zayd's formation in Arabic and Islamic learning matters here because it situates his hermeneutics within debates over how religious texts are understood. The secondary studies reviewed in this article connect his attention to language and interpretation with that intellectual setting (Ichwan, 2003; Kholid, 2014; Lutfi, 2018). Biographical details are relevant only insofar as they explain the problems addressed by his scholarship. Literary criticism provided resources for examining how texts produce meaning through language and cultural conventions. In the accounts used here, Abū Zayd's critical project also addresses the authority exercised by interpreters when they present a historically situated reading as the only possible meaning of revelation (Ichwan, 2003; Lutfi, 2018; Makin et al., 2002). The methodological issue is the justification of an interpretation, rather than the interpreter's public reputation.

His work on Mu'tazilite accounts of metaphor and on Ibn 'Arabī's interpretation is especially relevant to this concern. These inquiries connect differences in reading with the theological and intellectual commitments of interpreters (Kholid, 2014; Zayd, 2003). They help explain why his later hermeneutics asks both what linguistic evidence permits and how an interpreter's assumptions shape the questions brought to the text. In Naqd al-Khiṭāb al-Dīnī, the criticism of religious discourse is directed toward the conversion of human interpretation into unquestionable authority. As reconstructed by Ichwan, this criticism makes the distinction between revelation and historically produced explanations of revelation central to Abū Zayd's project (Ichwan, 2003). Controversies surrounding his work form part of its reception, but do not establish the truth or falsity of its arguments.

The discussion below consequently concentrates on context, meaning and significance, and the procedures through which a reading is justified. The wider writings discussed by Ichwan, Lutfi, and the contributors to Studi al-Qur'an kontemporer provide intellectual orientation (Ichwan, 2003; Lutfi, 2018; Makin et al., 2002). They are not treated as interchangeable evidence for every stage of Abū Zayd's thought. This distinction keeps the reconstruction tied to the arguments relevant to the comparison.

### The importance of context

For Abū Zayd, a linguistic expression acquires meaning within a context, or siyāq, rather than through an isolated dictionary equivalent. This is particularly significant where a word can carry several meanings (Billa, 2012; Lutfi, 2018). The socio-cultural level concerns the linguistic conventions and social practices that make communication intelligible. Interpreters must therefore examine how a term functions within the language and circumstances of the passage before drawing

broader conclusions from it (Latief, 2003). Historicity, in this account, is a condition of understanding the text's communication, not a sufficient reason to reduce every passage to a single historical event.

A second level concerns the communicative situation: who is addressed, which voices appear in the discourse, and what response the passage seeks. A third level concerns the internal organization of discourse, including the relation between narrative, exhortation, command, and prohibition (Latief, 2003). These levels require attention to textual indications of speaker, addressee, and rhetorical purpose. They should not be replaced by conjectures about the Prophet's psychological state when the text and historical evidence do not support such conjectures.

Linguistic context includes syntax, word order, figurative expression, and relations among sentences. The context of reading adds the interpreter's historical position and prior assumptions (Latief, 2003). Together, these dimensions explain why interpretation involves both the reconstruction of earlier communication and reflection on the reader's own questions. Acknowledging the reader's role does not remove textual constraints: a proposed meaning must still be defensible through language, the surrounding passage, and the relevant historical evidence.

## Meaning and significance

The distinction between ma'nā (meaning) and maghzā (significance) organizes this relationship. Meaning concerns the sense reconstructed through the text's linguistic and historical conditions; significance concerns the relevance argued for in another situation (Kholid, 2014). The two tasks are connected, but a contemporary concern does not by itself establish what a passage originally meant. Conversely, reconstructing an earlier meaning does not automatically settle every question of present application. The relation to E. D. Hirsch discussed in the secondary literature helps clarify this distinction, while Abū Zayd's concern remains the interpretation of religious discourse (Alfitri, 2002; Kholid, 2014). Objectivity is best understood here as an aspiration to make readings answerable to evidence and criticism, rather than as the elimination of every interpretive presupposition.

The secondary literature also reconstructs levels of meaning that distinguish historically referential statements, figurative communication, and meanings whose significance may be developed in later circumstances (Lutfi, 2018; Makin et al., 2002). These distinctions are useful insofar as they direct attention to the kind of claim a passage makes. They should not become a rigid classification imposed before a close reading. An interpreter must explain why a statement is being treated as historical, metaphorical, or open to a particular contextual extension, and show how that decision follows from the passage. The procedure reconstructed from these studies begins with a defined textual problem, examines relevant verses in their local and wider contexts, and considers the linguistic and historical grounds for a proposed reading (Ichwan, 2003; Lutfi, 2018). The move toward significance then requires an additional argument explaining the relation between the reconstructed meaning and a contemporary question. References to what is unspoken, or maskūt 'anh, cannot dispense with this requirement. They identify an inferential task whose assumptions must be stated, rather than an unrestricted permission to attribute a preferred conclusion to the Qur'an.

## An example of meaning and significance in Abū Zayd's interpretation

An example of the application of Nasr Hāmid's hermeneutics can be seen when interpreting verses about inheritance rights for women in Qs. an-Nisā' [4]: 7 and 11:

لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيْبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدٰنِ وَالْاَقْرَبُوْنَ ۪ وَلِلنِّسَآءِ نَصِيْبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدٰنِ وَالْاَقْرَبُوْنَ مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ اَوْ كَثُرَ ۗ نَصِيْبًا مَّفْرُوْضًا

English paraphrase of Quran 4:7: Both men and women have an established entitlement to the property left by their parents and close relatives, whether the estate is large or small (Quran English Translation: Clear, Pure, Easy to Read Modern English, 2015).

يُوْصِيْكُمُ اللّٰهُ فِيْٓ اَوْلَادِكُمْ لِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ ۚ فَاِنْ كُنَّ نِسَآءً فَوْقَ اثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُنَّ ثُلُثَا مَا تَرَكَ ۚ وَاِنْ كَانَتْ وَاحِدَةً فَلَهَا النِّصْفُ ۗ وَلِاَبَوَيْهِ لِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ مِمَّا تَرَكَ اِنْ كَانَ لَهٗ وَلَدٌ ۚ فَاِنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ وَلَدٌ وَّوَرِثَهٗٓ اَبَوٰهُ فَلِاُمِّهِ الثُّلُثُ ۚ فَاِنْ كَانَ لَهٗٓ اِخْوَةٌ فَلِاُمِّهِ السُّدُسُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُّوْصِيْ بِهَآ اَوْ دَيْنٍ ۗ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ وَاَبْنَآؤُكُمْ ۚ لَا تَدْرُوْنَ اَيُّهُمْ اَقْرَبُ لَكُمْ نَفْعًا ۗ فَرِيْضَةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا

English paraphrase of Quran 4:11: When sons and daughters inherit together, a son receives the equivalent of two daughters' portions. The verse also specifies portions for daughters and parents under stated conditions, after bequests and debts, and concludes that these allocations are a divine obligation. This summary concerns the configurations addressed in the verse; the two-to-one ratio should not be generalized to every possible relationship between male and female heirs (Quran English Translation: Clear, Pure, Easy to Read Modern English, 2015, Quran 4:11).

In the contextual reconstruction summarized by Ichwan and Lutfi, Quran 4:7 establishes women's entitlement to inheritance, while Quran 4:11 specifies distributions within particular family configurations (Ichwan, 2003; Lutfi, 2018). The comparison with earlier patriarchal practices helps explain why recognizing women as heirs is significant within Abū Zayd's account. Such historical claims should be stated with appropriate scope: they concern practices discussed in the sources and do not establish that all women in every pre-Islamic community lacked property rights. Abū Zayd relates the stipulated portions to a wider movement toward justice within the circumstances addressed by revelation (Abū Zayd, 1994; Ichwan, 2003; Lutfi, 2018).

The phrase li al-dhakar mithl ḥaẓẓ al-unthayayn specifies a relationship between sons' and daughters' portions within the address concerning children. It does not grammatically announce the abolition of the Qur'anic inheritance system. In the reading attributed to Abū Zayd, the recognition of women's shares and the restriction of male entitlement have a historical meaning from which a further significance concerning justice is proposed (Abū Zayd, 1994; Ichwan, 2003; Lutfi, 2018). The move from this account to a contemporary redistribution is a disputed hermeneutical inference, not a conclusion established by syntax alone. El-Refaee's critique highlights the unresolved criteria for judging a distribution objectively fair (El-Refaee, 2024). This example therefore illustrates both the attraction of contextualization and the need to justify its normative bridge.

## Quranic intertextuality in Angelika Neuwirth

### Intellectual orientation and the surah as a unit

Neuwirth's training in Arabic literature, Semitic studies, and philology is relevant to the combination of literary and historical questions in her work. The account summarized by Fikriyati locates her Qur'anic studies within research on Late Antiquity and the development of the early community (Fikriyati, 2015). The comparison below concentrates on these analytical commitments,

rather than academic appointments and awards. They explain why composition, oral address, and relations with other traditions must be examined together in her approach.

## Neuwirth's concept of the Quran

Neuwirth's distinction between Qur'an and muṣḥaf differentiates the communication of successive proclamations from the received, arranged scriptural corpus. Her article Two Faces of the Qur'ān makes orality and the conditions of communication central to this distinction (Fikriyati, 2015; Neuwirth, 2010). A pre-canonical reading asks how a passage could have addressed listeners within an emerging community, while a reading of the received corpus also attends to its later canonical setting. These are different analytical perspectives on the material, not a claim that written scripture cannot generate new meaning. The distinction is therefore useful for identifying which historical and literary questions an interpretation is asking.

## Surah based intertextuality

The surah provides an important level at which to examine the organization of proclamation. Changes in addressee, rhyme, argument, and narrative sequence help establish how individual passages work within a larger composition (Fikriyati, 2015; Neuwirth, 2010). Isolating a verse can obscure these relations, but recognizing canonical form does not in itself require a literalist or historically inattentive reading. Neuwirth's contribution is to connect literary form with a developing communicative situation. Her historical interest must therefore be considered alongside, rather than in place of, linguistic and rhetorical analysis (Fikriyati, 2015).

For the purposes of comparison, the procedure described in the secondary literature can be reconstructed through three connected tasks: examining the internal composition of a surah, relating a passage to other Qur'anic communications, and considering its dialogue with historically relevant traditions (Fikriyati, 2015; Fina, 2014, 2016). This is an analytical reconstruction, rather than a claim that every study by Neuwirth follows one fixed formula. Intertextual parallels require evaluation of differences as well as similarities, and proposed chronologies remain historical hypotheses. The method does not require a new physical manuscript arranged by revelation chronology, nor does it imply that Muslim exegetes uniformly ignore wider textual relations.

## An example of surah based intertextuality

The Maryam narrative shows why textual location must be established before intertextual comparison. Quran 19:16–40 includes Maryam's withdrawal, the announcement of a son, childbirth, her return to her people, and the infant Jesus' speech. The account of provision encountered by Zakariyyā belongs to Quran 3:37 and should not be inserted into the sequence of Surah Maryam. The readings discussed by Fikriyati and Neuwirth bring these passages into comparison while attending to their different literary settings (Fikriyati, 2015; Neuwirth, 2003). The first analytical requirement is thus to distinguish the content of each passage before interpreting relations between them.

Quran 3:33–62 situates Maryam and Jesus within a wider argument concerning chosen families, birth, revelation, and prophetic authority. Its relation to Quran 19:16–40 is an interpretive question about the reworking of shared narrative material, rather than evidence that the two passages narrate identical scenes (Fikriyati, 2015; Neuwirth, 2003). The designation of Maryam as a sister of

Aaron in Quran 19:28 should not be turned into an unargued biological genealogy linking Jesus directly to Moses' generation. Likewise, the comparison does not justify attributing a single attitude to all Jewish or Christian communities. Claims about particular interlocutors require evidence beyond the recurrence of a name or motif.

The comparison can illuminate the narrative prominence of Maryam and of her mother, while keeping historical reconstruction distinct from contemporary conclusions about gender. Relations to Christian traditions, including the hymn traditions discussed in the cited literature, are hypotheses to be examined through chronology, transmission, wording, and rhetorical function (Fikriyati, 2015; Neuwirth, 2003). Similarity alone does not establish direct literary borrowing. A defensible reading explains what the Qur'anic passage does with a shared motif and how its theological argument differs. This makes intertextuality a historically controlled interpretation of dialogue rather than a list of external parallels.

Comparative contributions to contemporary Quranic exegesis

Table 1. Comparative matrix of interpretive priorities and constraints

| Indicator | Abū Zayd | Neuwirth |
|---|---|---|
| Concept of the text | Historically situated linguistic communication; interpretation distinguishes revelation from human explanation. | Oral proclamation and received muṣḥaf; literary form is related to the emergence of a community. |
| Historical context | Earlier linguistic and social circumstances are related to the situation of later readers. | The setting of proclamation, developing audiences, and traditions circulating in Late Antiquity. |
| Interpretive unit | A defined passage and thematically related verses, with local linguistic constraints. | The composition of a surah and relations among passages, with chronology treated as a hypothesis. |
| Textual relations | Relations among verses help constrain meaning and the proposed extension of significance. | Intratextual coherence and historically assessed dialogue with other scriptural traditions. |
| Contemporary relevance | The transition from ma'nā to maghzā requires an explicit argument for renewed significance. | Historical-literary reconstruction is central in the works compared; normative application requires a further argument. |
| Main constraint | An ethical objective does not itself justify a particular reading or application. | A thematic parallel does not itself establish historical availability or literary dependence. |

Note. The matrix synthesizes the works and secondary reconstructions discussed above. It describes relative emphases within the selected corpus, rather than exclusive boundaries or an exhaustive account of either scholar's thought.

## Thematic frameworks of Quranic exegesis

Mustaqim's typology of thematic interpretation provides a useful vocabulary for comparing interpretive units (Mustaqim, 2014). Neuwirth's sustained attention to the composition of individual surahs is highlighted in Fikriyati's reconstruction (Fikriyati, 2015), whereas the studies of Abū Zayd emphasize thematic relations together with linguistic and contextual analysis (Ichwan, 2003; Lutfi, 2018). This is a difference of emphasis, not a rule that one scholar can only read complete surahs and the other only collections of verses. Similarly, using a proposed chronology to interpret development between passages is different from requiring a physically reordered muṣḥaf (Fikriyati, 2015; Neuwirth, 2003). The comparison in Table 1 therefore distinguishes preferred analytical units from exclusive methodological boundaries.

## The context of revelation

The studies of Abū Zayd discuss the relation between the linguistic text and the received scriptural corpus (Alfitri, 2002), while Neuwirth explicitly distinguishes Qur'an and muṣḥaf (Neuwirth, 2010). The comparison is useful, but the vocabularies should not be treated as exact equivalents: naṣṣ does not simply name a separate pre-codification document. Pre-canonical analysis concerns the process of communication and reception reconstructed from the evidence (Fikriyati, 2015; Fina, 2014, 2016). This shared historical attention supports a comparison with later contextual methods, including the discussion of meaning and significance by Syamsuddin (Syamsuddin, 2020), while retaining the different purposes for which these distinctions are used.

## Historical context and contemporary contextualization

Abū Zayd's distinction between meaning and significance makes the contemporary reader's situation an explicit part of the interpretive task (Latief, 2003; Lutfi, 2018). Neuwirth's historical analysis gives sustained attention to the community and interlocutors addressed by Qur'anic proclamation (Neuwirth, 2003). The distinction concerns the explanatory aims of the works examined here. It does not show that Neuwirth excludes language or context, or that her scholarship has no relevance for contemporary readers. Rather, a contemporary normative application requires an additional argument beyond reconstructing historical communication. In an integrated approach, that argument must be identified and assessed instead of being assumed.

## Implicit meaning in Quranic verses

Both approaches make it possible to question readings that detach words from their communicative setting. The secondary studies of Abū Zayd emphasize criticism of ideologically imposed interpretation and the need to relate significance to meaning (Kholid, 2014; Latief, 2003; Lutfi, 2018). Studies of Neuwirth emphasize literary coherence and the historical development of Qur'anic communication (Fikriyati, 2015; Fina, 2014, 2016). These findings do not establish that

every passage contains a concealed universal moral message. They establish the methodological need to explain how an inference arises from textual organization, historical evidence, and the interpreter's stated questions.

## Integrating textual intertextual and contextual methods

The comparison supports a division of interpretive tasks rather than a simple addition of two complete systems. Abū Zayd's account clarifies the responsibility to justify a movement from historical meaning to contemporary significance (Kholid, 2014; Latief, 2003; Lutfi, 2018). Neuwirth's approach contributes sustained attention to surah composition, oral communication, and historically situated textual dialogue (Fikriyati, 2015; Fina, 2014, 2016; Neuwirth, 2003, 2010). Neither contribution removes the need for the other forms of evidence. The synthesis proposed here orders the tasks so that a present-day conclusion can be assessed against the textual and historical grounds offered for it.

The proposed sequence begins with linguistic and surah analysis, continues through comparison with related Qur'anic passages and historically plausible intertexts, and then reconstructs the communicative meaning with its uncertainties. Only after these tasks does it propose a contemporary significance and state the normative premises that connect it to the historical reading. The stages can be revisited when new evidence challenges an earlier inference; their order makes the dependencies clear rather than claiming that interpretation always proceeds mechanically. Theoretical integration therefore changes the burden of explanation. A textual observation must identify its linguistic grounds; an intertextual hypothesis must account for historical plausibility and relevant differences; a contemporary proposal must explain why its ethical inference follows. This division allows alternative readings to be compared at the stage where they disagree. It also prevents contemporary relevance from being used as proof of a reconstructed historical context.

Table 2. Conceptual illustration using the Maryam narrative

| Stage | Application and evidential requirement |
|---|---|
| Text and composition | Read Quran 19:16–40 as a sequence: withdrawal, annunciation, birth, return, and Jesus' speech. The passage's argument about Jesus remains part of the interpretation. |
| Related Qur'anic passages | Compare Quran 3:33–62. Locate Maryam's mother's vow in 3:35–36 and the provision encountered by Zakariyyā in 3:37, without importing these scenes into Surah 19. |
| Historical intertexts | Test proposed parallels with late antique annunciation traditions for chronology, circulation, and rhetorical function. Similarity can identify a question; it cannot establish direct dependence. |
| Historical meaning | Relate the narrative's treatment of Maryam's honor, divine agency, and Jesus' prophetic speech to the passage's own argument. Mark uncertainty about particular historical interlocutors. |

| Stage | Application and evidential requirement |
|---|---|
| Contemporary significance | Consider a carefully argued reading about dignity and gendered stigma. Explain the ethical premises and relevant textual evidence, consider counter-readings, and avoid deriving a new legal rule from a narrative analogy alone. |

Note. This is the author's conceptual illustration of a shared procedure, not an attribution of the same exegesis to both scholars. It does not establish a particular intertext's historical availability or demonstrate the model's effectiveness across other passages.

## CONCLUSION

The comparison identifies a shared commitment to understanding Qur'anic language within historical communication, together with different interpretive priorities. Abū Zayd makes the relation between meaning and contemporary significance explicit. Neuwirth connects the literary organization of proclamation with the formation of an early community and its dialogue with other traditions. Their difference is therefore not a choice between textuality without intertextuality and intertextuality without context. It concerns the units, evidence, and purposes that receive emphasis in the works examined. The methodological contribution is a staged conceptual framework: establish a passage's linguistic and surah relations; compare related Qur'anic material; evaluate historically plausible intertexts; reconstruct meaning with stated uncertainties; and justify any proposed contemporary significance. The comparative matrix makes these tasks and their respective emphases explicit. The shared Maryam illustration shows how the sequence can prevent the conflation of passages and distinguish a historical reading from a normative proposal, without claiming that the two scholars themselves offered this combined reading.

The framework remains provisional. The purposive corpus does not represent either scholar's entire output, some reconstructions depend on secondary studies, and intertextual or chronological claims require evidence that a conceptual comparison cannot supply by itself. The Maryam illustration does not constitute a comprehensive historical-critical analysis or validate the model's effectiveness. Future research should apply the framework to a defined passage using primary texts and documented candidate intertexts, compare alternative readings, and test whether the transition to contemporary significance remains accountable to the linguistic and historical findings.

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