

JOHANN FÜCK'S VIEW OF THE QUR'AN A Philological-Historical Study and its Relevance for Contemporary Qur'anic Studies

PANDANGAN JOHANN FÜCK TERHADAP AL- QUR'AN Telaah Filologis-Historis dan Relevansinya bagi Studi Al- Qur'an Kontemporer

رؤية يوهان فوك للقرآن الكريم
دراسة فيلولوجية تاريخية وصلتها بالدراسات القرآنية المعاصرة

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Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji pandangan Johann Wilhelm Fück terhadap Al-Qur'an melalui kerangka filologis-historis serta mengevaluasi relevansinya bagi studi Al-Qur'an kontemporer. Fokus kajian diarahkan pada cara Fück menempatkan bahasa Arab, sejarah Arabistik Eropa, dan bukti linguistik sebagai pintu masuk dalam membaca teks Qur'ani. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode studi kepustakaan dengan analisis isi terhadap karya-karya Fück dan literatur mutakhir mengenai filologi Qur'ani, manuskrip awal, hermeneutika, dan kajian tafsir. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kontribusi Fück terletak pada penegasannya terhadap filologi Arab sebagai disiplin penting dalam studi Al-Qur'an. Namun, pendekatannya perlu dibaca secara kritis karena lahir dari tradisi orientalisme Eropa yang memiliki asumsi epistemologis berbeda dari tradisi tafsir Islam. Kajian ini juga menemukan bahwa perkembangan paleografi, kodikologi, filologi digital, dan studi tafsir Indonesia memungkinkan pembacaan ulang terhadap warisan Fück secara lebih seimbang. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa gagasan Fück dapat digunakan sebagai perangkat metodologis, bukan sebagai otoritas tunggal, untuk memperkuat dialog akademik antara filologi, sejarah, dan ulum al-Qur'an.

Kata Kunci: Johann Fück, Al-Qur'an, filologi Arab, Orientalisme, Studi Al-Qur'an

Abstract

This article examines Johann Wilhelm Fück's view of the Qur'an through a philological-historical framework and evaluates its relevance for contemporary Qur'anic studies. The study focuses on how Fück positioned Arabic, the history of European Arabism, and linguistic evidence as entry points for reading the Qur'anic text. This research employs library research with content analysis of Fück's works and recent scholarship on Qur'anic philology, early manuscripts, hermeneutics, and tafsir studies. The findings show that Fück's contribution lies in his affirmation of Arabic philology as an essential discipline in Qur'anic studies, while his approach must be read critically because it emerged from European Orientalism with epistemological assumptions different from those of the Islamic exegetical tradition. The study also finds that developments in paleography, codicology, digital philology, and Indonesian tafsir studies make it possible to reread Fück's legacy in a more balanced way. The article concludes that Fück's ideas can be used as methodological tools, not as a single authority, to strengthen academic dialogue among philology, history, and ulum al-Qur'an.

Keywords: Johann Fück, Qur'an, Arabic philology, Orientalism, Qur'anic studies

ملخص

يتناول هذا المقال رؤية يوهان فيلهلم فوك للقرآن الكريم من خلال إطار فيلولوجي تاريخي، كما يقيم مدى صلتها بالدراسات القرآنية المعاصرة. وتركز الدراسة على الكيفية التي جعل بها فوك اللغة العربية، وتاريخ الدراسات العربية في أوروبا، والأدلة اللغوية مداخل أساسية لقراءة النص القرآني. وتعتمد هذه الدراسة على منهج البحث المكتبي مع تحليل المحتوى لأعمال فوك والدراسات الحديثة المتعلقة بالفيلولوجيا القرآنية، والمخطوطات المبكرة، والهرمينوطيقا، ودراسات التفسير. وتبين النتائج أن إسهام فوك يتمثل في تأكيده أهمية الفيلولوجيا العربية بوصفها علماً أساسياً في الدراسات القرآنية. غير أن مقارنته ينبغي أن تُقرأ قراءة نقدية، لأنها نشأت في سياق الاستشراق الأوروبي الذي ينطلق من افتراضات إبستمولوجية تختلف عن افتراضات التراث التفسيري الإسلامي. كما تكشف الدراسة أن تطور علم الخطوط القديمة، والكوديكولوجيا، والفيلولوجيا الرقمية، ودراسات التفسير

في إندونيسيا يتيح إعادة قراءة تراث فوك بصورة أكثر توازناً. ويخلص المقال إلى أن أفكار فوك يمكن توظيفها بوصفها أدوات منهجية، لا سلطة وحيدة، من أجل تعزيز الحوار الأكاديمي بين الفيلولوجيا والتاريخ وعلوم القرآن.

الكلمات المفتاحية: يوهان فوك، القرآن، الفيلولوجيا العربية، الاستشراق، الدراسات القرآنية

A. INTRODUCTION

Academic study of the Qur'an always stands at the intersection of theological reverence, philological precision, and historical awareness. In the Islamic tradition, the Qur'an is understood as the revelation of God sent down to the Prophet Muhammad, whereas in modern academic studies it is also examined as an Arabic-language document with form, style, structure, a history of reception, and traditions of transmission. The tension between these two domains need not be positioned as an absolute opposition. Instead, it can become a space for scholarly dialogue when each approach is placed proportionally. In this context, Johann Wilhelm Fück's view deserves renewed examination, especially because he was one of the German Arabists who paid close attention to the relationship among Arabic, the history of scholarship, and the study of Islamic texts.¹

Fück is known for his works on the history of Arabic studies in Europe and on the development of the Arabic language. His concern was not directed solely at the Qur'an as a sacred scripture, but also at the linguistic environment and scholarly traditions that make Arabic texts historically intelligible. On the one hand, such an approach helps researchers examine the lexical, grammatical, and rhetorical details of the text. On the other hand, it may invite objections when it is seen as placing revelation entirely within the frame of human history. For that reason, a

¹ Johann Fück, *Die arabischen Studien in Europa bis in den Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1955), 23–28.

study of Fück must avoid two extremes: accepting all of his conclusions without criticism, or rejecting them merely because they come from the tradition of Orientalism. Fück's relevance lies precisely in the need to assess how philological tools can be used critically in Qur'anic studies²

The main issue in reading Fück lies in how one understands the relationship among language, history, and revelation. For the philological tradition, language is evidence that can be examined: words, grammatical forms, sentence structures, semantic relations, and changes in usage can serve as a basis for interpreting meaning. For the tradition of *ulum al-Qur'an*, language is also important, but it does not stand alone. The language of the Qur'an is related to *qira'at*, *asbab al-nuzul*, *munasabah*, *balaghah*, *tafsir bi al-ma'thur*, and the authority of scholarly transmission. Therefore, when Fück uses the tools of European philology, the critical question is not only whether those tools are useful, but also how they can be placed alongside the epistemology of Islamic exegesis without reducing the transcendent dimension of revelation.³

Contemporary Qur'anic studies show that historical and philological approaches no longer stand as single approaches. Research on early manuscripts, paleography, codicology, redactional history, genre studies, digital humanities, and thematic *tafsir* has expanded the range of academic questions. Amid these developments, Fück can be positioned as a historical point in the Arabist tradition: he emphasized the importance of Arabic as the primary field of Islamic studies, but he did not have access to the range of manuscript data and digital tools now available. Thus, this study reads

² Johann Fück, *Arabīya: Untersuchungen zur arabischen Sprach- und Stilgeschichte* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1950), 11–16.

³ Angelika Neuwirth, *The Qur'an and Late Antiquity: A Shared Heritage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 45–52; Nicolai Sinai, *The Qur'an: A Historical-Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 1–8; Nicolai Sinai, "Historical Criticism and Recent Trends in Western Scholarship on the Qur'an: Some Hermeneutic Reflections," *Journal of College of Sharia and Islamic Studies* 38, no. 1 (2020): 136–141, <https://doi.org/10.29117/jcsis.2020.0259>.

Fück not as the end of a debate, but as part of a genealogy of methods continually renewed by new findings and theories.⁴

Rereading Fück is also important for the Indonesian context. Islamic higher education institutions, Qur'anic studies journals, and Islamic research centers in Indonesia increasingly use interdisciplinary approaches. Tafsir research is no longer limited to normative explanation of verses, but now includes manuscript studies, reception history, semiotics, stylistics, sociology of knowledge, and hermeneutics. These developments require mature methodological judgment: a researcher must be able to benefit from Western academic traditions without losing sensitivity to the internal tools of the Islamic sciences. The study of Fück can provide an example of how Orientalist sources may be read critically, verified, and placed in dialogue with the Muslim tradition.⁵

Recent literature on Qur'anic manuscripts shows that material evidence can enrich linguistic study. Genizah fragments, Qur'anic papyri, the San'a palimpsest, and Nusantara manuscripts demonstrate that Qur'anic studies require a combination of textual precision, the history of writing, and the social context of reading. In this respect, Fück's philological spirit remains relevant, but it must be expanded. Philology does not merely mean tracing words and forms; it also means reading the material traces of the text: scripts, page layout, punctuation, scribal corrections, and traditions of use. This shift provides a basis for reassessing the limits of Fück's view of the Qur'an.⁶

⁴ Nicolai Sinai, ed., *Unlocking the Medinan Qur'an, Texts and Studies on the Qur'an* 19 (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 1–15.

⁵ Fadhli Lukman, "Conflicting Interests in the Creation of a State-Authorised Translation: Comparing the Saudi and Indonesian Editions of Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahnya," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 26, no. 1 (2024): 38–42, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2024.0568>; Lilik Ummi Kaltsum and Ahmad Syaifuddin Amin, "The Development of Qur'anic Thematic Exegesis in Indonesia: Historical Landscape and Shifts of Authority," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 25, no. 2 (2024): 296–302, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v25i2.5422>.

⁶ Magdalen M. Connolly and Nick Posegay, "A Survey of Personal-Use Qur'an Manuscripts Based on Fragments from the Cairo Genizah," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 23, no. 2 (2021): 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2021.0465>; François Déroche, *Qur'ans of the Umayyads: A First Overview* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 17–25; Majid Daneshgar, "Islamic

Some classical Orientalist literature tends to place religious texts within a historical scheme assumed to be universal. Such a scheme is often problematic because it does not sufficiently account for the internal authority of the Islamic tradition and the ways Muslims construct knowledge about revelation. However, criticism of Orientalism should not ignore its technical contributions, such as meticulous cataloging, language study, and the history of Arabist disciplines. This article adopts a middle position: Fück is read as a scholar who contributed to Arabic philology, but the reading of his work must be accompanied by epistemological criticism. This stance allows the research to remain scholarly without falling into apologetics or a priori rejection.⁷

Based on this background, this article formulates three questions. First, how can Fück's central views of the Qur'an be reconstructed from his interest in Arabic and the history of Arabism? Second, to what extent does Fück's philological-historical approach contribute to contemporary Qur'anic studies? Third, what are the limits and opportunities of using Fück's legacy in Qur'anic studies within Muslim academic settings, especially Indonesia? These three questions guide the discussion so that it does not stop at intellectual biography, but moves toward a more measured methodological evaluation.

The contribution of this article lies in its effort to clarify Fück's position critically. The article does not seek to make Fück a normative authority for understanding the Qur'an, but to identify methodological aspects that can be brought into dialogue with *ulum al-Qur'an*. In this way, the study of Orientalist thought is not understood as ideological acceptance, but as an academic exercise in testing assumptions, methods, and evidence. This approach is relevant to the development of Qur'anic

Studies and Manuscript Cultures: A Reflection,” *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 20, no. 3 (2018): 245–247, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2018.0359>.

⁷ Emmanouela Stefanidis, “Narratives of Qur'anic Evolution in Western Academia,” *ReOrient* 9, no. 1 (2024): 70–76; Nuzul Fitriansyah, “Literary Discourse on Qur'anic Studies: A Historical Study on the Model of Literary Interpretation to the Quran,” *Tbaqafyyat: Jurnal Bahasa, Peradaban, dan Informasi Islam* 21, no. 2 (2022): 121–128, <https://doi.org/10.14421/taq.2022.21202>.

research that requires scholarly integrity, openness to new data, and the ability to integrate scholarly tools across traditions.

Object and Objectives of the Study

The material object of this study is Johann Wilhelm Fück's view as it relates to the Qur'an, Arabic, and the tradition of Arabist philology. This object is not limited to a single explicit statement about the Qur'an, because Fück is more widely known as a historian of Arabism and a philologist of Arabic. Therefore, Fück's thought is reconstructed through his main concern with the history of Arabic studies in Europe, the development of Arabic, and the way linguistic evidence is used to understand Islamic texts. The formal object of this study is the methodological dimension of that view: how language is positioned as a basis of analysis, how history is used as context, and how this approach can be evaluated from the perspective of contemporary Qur'anic studies.

Limiting the object of study is necessary because research on Fück can expand into the history of Orientalism, German academic institutions, the history of Semitic philology, and the politics of European knowledge. This article takes only the part directly relevant to Qur'anic studies, especially the question of Arabic and the historicity of reading. This limitation makes the analysis more focused. Fück is not discussed as a single figure who determined the entire direction of Orientalist studies, but as an important node in the Arabist tradition that places language as a primary instrument for understanding Islam. From this point, the article assesses the opportunities and limitations of the philological approach in reading the Qur'an.⁸

The general objective of this study is to describe and critically evaluate Fück's view of the Qur'an. Its specific objectives include four points. First, it maps the philological and historical elements that shape Fück's

⁸ Fück, *Die arabischen Studien*, 54–61; Asyiq Billah Ali et al., "Nicolai Sinai's Historical-Critical Approach to the Qur'an: A Critical Study of Literary Coherence, Chronology, and Intertextuality," *Jurnal At-Tibyan: Jurnal Ilmu Alqur'an dan Tafsir* 10, no. 1 (June 2025): 54–60, <https://doi.org/10.32505/at-tibyan.v10i1.11367>.

framework of thought. Second, it connects that framework with recent developments in Qur'anic studies. Third, it assesses the epistemological limits of the Orientalist approach when used in the context of the Islamic tradition. Fourth, it formulates the critical relevance of Fück for Qur'anic research in Indonesia. These objectives show that the article is not merely descriptive, but also evaluative and contributive to methodological development.

Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich discussion of the relationship among philology, hermeneutics, and *ulum al-Qur'an*. Practically, it can assist researchers, students, and journal editors in assessing manuscripts that use Orientalist sources. One common problem in writing articles about Orientalist figures is the tendency to make broad claims without source verification. Through a methodological reading, this article emphasizes that Orientalist sources should be used through three procedures: mapping the context, examining the argument, and comparing it with recent literature. These procedures are necessary so that Qur'anic studies remain critical, accurate, and unbiased.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research method. This choice is appropriate to the nature of the object, which consists of a scholar's thought, a scholarly tradition, and methodological development. The research data consist of academic texts, both Fück's works and secondary literature discussing Qur'anic philology, the history of Arabism, early manuscripts, hermeneutics, and contemporary tafsir. Library research was selected because the aim of the study is not to measure respondents' perceptions, but to reconstruct arguments and evaluate methodological positions. Thus, the entire discussion in this article is based on written documents that can be academically verified.

The primary sources of this study include Fück's works that are relevant to the history of Arabism and the study of Arabic. These works do not always speak directly and systematically about the Qur'an, but they provide indications of how Fück understood Arabic as a medium of Islamic civilization. The secondary sources include books and journal

articles published primarily between 2016 and 2026. Classical literature outside this range is used only in a limited way when it has a foundational position, such as Fück's own works and early manuscript studies. This limitation of publication range is adjusted to the journal screening requirement that prioritizes recent references.⁹

The literature search was conducted using academic databases and scholarly publisher catalogs, such as Google Scholar, Edinburgh University Press, Brill, Oxford University Press, University of California Press, and Indonesian Qur'anic studies journals. The keywords used included "Johann Fück," "Arabic philology," "Qur'anic philology," "Qur'anic manuscripts," "historical-critical Qur'an," "Orientalism and Qur'anic studies," "digital philology," and "Indonesian tafsir." The selected literature was then classified according to its proximity to the research focus: Arabic philology, manuscript studies, hermeneutics, and the reception of Qur'anic studies in Muslim contexts.¹⁰

The criteria for including literature consist of four aspects. First, the source must discuss the Qur'an, Arabic, tafsir, manuscripts, or Islamic studies methodology in a relevant way. Second, the source must be an academic book, journal article, or book chapter published by a scholarly publisher. Third, the source must contain arguments that can be used to assess Fück methodologically, not merely mention his name in passing. Fourth, recent sources are prioritized to show research development. The exclusion criteria include popular writings without academic apparatus, sources lacking adequate bibliographic information, and references not directly related to the research questions.

Data analysis was conducted through content analysis. The first stage was exploratory reading to identify key terms and issues, such as philology,

⁹ Fück, Arabīya, 42–47.

¹⁰ Wildan Imaduddin Muhammad Syahrullah, Eva Nugraha, and Aulia Raudhatul Jannah, "Corpus Coranicum and Digital Philology: A Methodological Model for Advancing Qur'anic Manuscript Studies in Indonesia," *Khazanah Theologia* 6, no. 3 (2024): 201–208, <https://doi.org/10.15575/kt.v6i3.45610>; Alba Fedeli, "Digital Humanities and Qur'anic Manuscript Studies: New Perspectives and Challenges for Collaborative Spaces and Plural Views," *Journal of College of Sharia and Islamic Studies* 38, no. 1 (2020): 147–158, <https://doi.org/10.29117/jcsis.2020.0260>.

Arabic, textual history, Orientalism, manuscripts, and tafsir. The second stage was thematic coding of recurring ideas. The third stage was critical synthesis, namely connecting those themes with the research questions. In the synthesis process, Fück's arguments were not accepted as final conclusions, but examined through recent literature. Thus, the analysis moved from reconstruction to evaluation, and then from evaluation to the formulation of relevance.¹¹

The validity of the study was maintained through source triangulation. Statements about philology did not rely only on Fück, but were compared with modern research on linguistic theory in tafsir and Qur'anic genre. Statements about textual history were not supported only by historical hypotheses, but were referred to manuscript and codicological studies. Statements about the Indonesian context were not drawn from general assumptions, but were compared with recent articles on thematic tafsir, Qur'an translation, and digital philology. This triangulation is important so that the study does not fall into overly broad generalization.¹²

Methodologically, this study has limitations. The article does not directly examine early Qur'anic manuscripts, does not conduct archival research on Fück's personal documents, and does not interview experts. These limitations make the conclusions conceptual and bibliographic. However, they do not reduce the relevance of the study because its main objective is to assess methodological construction, not to produce new codicological findings. By stating these limits, the article preserves alignment between method and claims.

¹¹ Ulrika Mårtensson, "Linguistic Theory in tafsīr between 100/400 and 700/1000: Implications for Qur'anic Studies," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 24, no. 3 (2022): 1–9, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2022.0514>; Samuel J. Ross, "What Were the Most Popular tafsīrs in Islamic History? Part 1: An Assessment of the Manuscript Record and the State of tafsīr Studies," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 25, no. 3 (2023): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2023.0555>.

¹² Devin J. Stewart, "Approaches to the Investigation of Speech Genres in the Qur'an," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 24, no. 1 (2022): 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2022.0489>.

C. RESULT

Fück in the Tradition of Arabist Philology

The review shows that Fück must be understood within the German Arabist tradition, which places language at the center of Islamic research. In this tradition, Arabic texts are studied through grammar, word history, rhetorical forms, and the development of literature. Fück inherited this concern and developed it through the history of Arabic studies in Europe. His work shows that mastery of Arabic is not merely a tool of translation, but a prerequisite for understanding the production of Islamic knowledge. Within this framework, the Qur'an is treated as an Arabic text that requires careful linguistic reading, even though for Muslims the text has the status of revelation.¹³

The placement of Arabic as the foundation of analysis is an important contribution of Fück. He affirmed that understanding Islamic texts cannot be separated from the history of Arabic, both in its classical form and in changing uses of terms. For Qur'anic studies, this principle reminds us that the meaning of a verse does not emerge only from translation, but from the semantic network of Arabic. Attention to roots, morphological patterns, syntactic arrangement, and rhetorical resonance is an inseparable part of interpretation. In this respect, Fück intersects with the traditions of *balaghah* and *tafsir lughawi* in Islam, although his epistemological basis differs.¹⁴

However, the review also shows that Fück's philology operates within a European academic horizon. This horizon requires critical distance from religious objects and tends to emphasize historical data that can be examined externally. This principle is useful for avoiding untested claims, but it can become reductive if it ignores how the Muslim tradition builds exegetical authority. Therefore, Fück's contribution is best viewed as an auxiliary tool. It strengthens the disciplines of language and history, but it

¹³ Fück, *Die arabischen Studien*, 70–76; Justine Howe, "Interpreting the Qur'an in the US: Religious Pluralism, Tradition, and Context," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 18, no. 3 (2016): 34–42.

¹⁴ Fück, *Arabīya*, 61–67; Mårtensson, "Linguistic Theory in tafsīr," 10–18.

is not sufficient to replace the tools of *ulum al-Qur'an*, which include *sanad*, *qira'at*, *asbab al-nuzul*, and the tafsir tradition.

The strength of Fück's approach lies in its precision in reading details. It encourages researchers not to leap directly to theological or ideological conclusions before examining the language of the text. This attitude is relevant to contemporary research, which often uses broad concepts such as hermeneutics, semiotics, or intertextuality, but sometimes pays insufficient attention to linguistic evidence. In Qur'anic studies, theory is strong only when it is supported by disciplined reading of words, structures, and contexts. Here Fück offers a methodological lesson: serious research requires familiarity with the source language.

On the other hand, the philological approach also has risks. Precision in reading words can make researchers overly confident that the history of meaning can be fully reconstructed. In fact, the Qur'anic text lives within oral tradition, ritual practice, and communal reception. Meaning is not stored only in written form, but also in the ways the text is recited, memorized, taught, and interpreted. For this reason, philology must be supplemented by reception studies, the anthropology of texts, and the history of tafsir. This limitation is important when Fück's legacy is used to read the Qur'an today.

The Qur'an as an Arabic Text and a Historical Document

The second theme emerging from the literature review is the way Fück's approach opens space for reading the Qur'an as an Arabic text situated in history. This statement is not identical with the denial of revelation. It shows that revelation, from the perspective of language, was delivered through an Arabic medium that has structure and context. Contemporary scholars such as Neuwirth and Sinai have developed readings that place the Qur'an within the environment of Late Antiquity and the history of the early Muslim community. Fück may be positioned

as one of the predecessors in a tradition that stresses the importance of linguistic and historical background.¹⁵

Within a linguistic-historical framework, the Qur'an is not read as a collection of propositions detached from communicative situations. It has interlocutors, patterns of address, forms of oath, narratives, commands, warnings, and dialogical forms. Studies of genre and speech genres in the Qur'an show that the structure of utterance is crucial for understanding the function of verses. Fück did not develop a detailed theory of genre in the way recent studies do, but his emphasis on language opened a path for readings attentive to forms of communication. Thus, his legacy can be connected with contemporary research on Qur'anic rhetoric and discourse structure.¹⁶

The review of modern literature also shows that historical readings of the Qur'an are not singular. Some approaches give more emphasis to the environment of earlier scriptures, some to internal chronology, and some to Muslim traditions about revelation. These differences show that the historical method is not a neutral instrument that always produces the same conclusion. It depends on data selection, assumptions, and the weight assigned to evidence. Therefore, the use of Fück must be accompanied by awareness that philology and history always involve interpretation. The strength of linguistic evidence must be distinguished from historical speculation that exceeds the data.¹⁷

This article finds that one of the most productive ways to read Fück is to place him in dialogue with the study of language in classical tafsir. From the beginning, the Islamic exegetical tradition has paid attention to

¹⁵ Neuwirth, *The Qur'an and Late Antiquity*, 80–91; Sinai, *The Qur'an*, 82–95; Sinai, "Historical Criticism and Recent Trends," 142–146.

¹⁶ Stewart, "Approaches to the Investigation of Speech Genres," 8–16; Shuruq Naguib, "The Hermeneutics of Miracle: Evolution, Eloquence, and the Critique of Scientific Exegesis in the Literary School of tafsir. Part I: From Muḥammad 'Abduh to Amīn al-Khūlī," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 21, no. 3 (2019): 57–64, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2019.0399>.

¹⁷ Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Creating the Qur'an: A Historical-Critical Study* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2022), 63–76; Ali et al., "Nicolai Sinai's Historical-Critical Approach to the Qur'an," 61–69.

word meaning, i'rab, majaz, balaghah, and the relationships among verses. In other words, attention to language is not a monopoly of Orientalism. The difference lies in the epistemological horizon. Fück and the Arabist tradition emphasize scholarly reconstruction based on philological tools, whereas Islamic tafsir combines language with transmitted reports, theology, and the authority of scholars. Awareness of this difference helps researchers avoid the claim that the Western approach is either entirely new or entirely foreign.¹⁸

From this perspective, Fück's view of the Qur'an can be formulated as a tendency to assess the text through linguistic and historical evidence. This tendency is useful when researchers seek to understand the structure of Qur'anic Arabic precisely. However, it must be limited when philological conclusions are used to make theological claims beyond the capacity of the method. Philology can show patterns of language; it does not automatically determine the status of revelation. Separating these domains of claim is a condition for keeping the reading of Fück academic and preventing it from becoming ideological polemic.

Relevance to Manuscript Studies and Digital Philology

The third theme concerns the development of Qur'anic manuscript studies. In Fück's time, access to manuscript data and reading technologies was not as comprehensive as it is today. Recent studies of Genizah fragments, papyri, palimpsests, and early codices show that textual history cannot be studied adequately through linguistic theory alone. Material evidence provides information about copying practices, orthographic variation, punctuation, surah arrangement, and the use of the mushaf. This expands the field of philology from the analysis of words to the study of textual objects. With such data, Fück's legacy can be updated and corrected.¹⁹

¹⁸ Mårtensson, "Linguistic Theory in tafsīr," 19–27.

¹⁹ Connolly and Posegay, "A Survey of Personal-Use Qur'an Manuscripts," 9–18; Nuria Martínez de Castilla, "A Bilingual Morisco Qur'an with Thirteen Lines to the Page," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 19, no. 3 (2017): 34–40, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2017.0301>.

Studies of the San'a palimpsest and the Codex Mashhad show that early Qur'anic manuscripts require multidisciplinary reading. Researchers do not ask only what words are written, but also how the text was copied, corrected, erased, overwritten, and used. Such information cannot be captured by traditional philology that relies only on printed editions. Therefore, Fück's method should be placed as an initial foundation that must be supplemented by codicology and paleography. This development does not negate philology, but expands it so that it becomes more responsive to material data.²⁰

Digital philology has also changed the way researchers approach the Qur'an. The availability of manuscript databases, digital images, collation tools, and electronic corpora makes textual comparison possible on a broader scale. Contemporary research in Indonesia has begun to consider digital models such as Corpus Coranicum as methodological resources for reading orthographic variation and transmission history. In this context, Fück's legacy can be understood as an early impulse to take linguistic evidence seriously, while digital technology provides new instruments for testing that evidence more broadly and transparently.²¹

However, the use of technology does not automatically produce better interpretation. Digitization can accelerate access, but it still requires philological competence, knowledge of rasm, qira'at, the history of the mushaf, and the ethics of interpretation. Without a careful academic framework, digital data can generate sensational claims about textual variation. Therefore, reading Fück in the digital era must emphasize methodological caution. Researchers must distinguish among

²⁰ Éléonore Cellard, "The Ṣan'ā' Palimpsest: Materializing the Codices," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 80, no. 1 (2021): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.1086/713473>; Nick Posegay, "Five Qur'anic Papyri from the Michaelides Collection at the Cambridge University Library," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 26, no. 1 (2024): 101–110, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2024.0570>; Morteza Karimi-Nia, "A New Document in the Early History of the Qur'an: Codex Mashhad, an 'Uthmānic Text of the Qur'an in Ibn Mas'ūd's Arrangement of Sūras," *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 10, no. 3 (2019): 292–303, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1878464X-01003002>.

²¹ Syahrullah, Nugraha, and Jannah, "Corpus Coranicum and Digital Philology," 209–216; Fedeli, "Digital Humanities and Qur'anic Manuscript Studies," 151–156.

orthographic variation, differences in copying, variant readings, and claims about semantic change. These categorical distinctions are important in Qur'anic studies.²²

This finding shows that Fück remains relevant not because all of his conclusions must be followed, but because he affirmed the importance of the basic work of philology. In the digital era, that basic work becomes even more important. The more data become available, the greater the need for analytical criteria. Researchers must be able to explain why a fragment is important, how its reading is verified, and how it is connected with the tradition of recitation. Otherwise, rich data will only become a collection of unfocused information. Thus, Fück's philology can serve as an initial discipline for managing the abundance of contemporary data.

Reception and Criticism in Contemporary Islamic Studies

The fourth theme is the critical reception of historical-philological approaches in contemporary Islamic studies. In modern literature, Orientalist approaches are no longer read uniformly. Some researchers highlight colonial bias and Eurocentric assumptions; others argue that philological tools remain useful if used critically. A more balanced position is to recognize that the tradition of Orientalism contains both epistemological problems and methodological legacies. Fück stands within this ambivalence. He cannot be separated from the history of European academia, but he also cannot be reduced to a single representation of bias toward Islam.²³

Modern studies of the methodologies of Sinai, Neuwirth, and Shoemaker show that Western Qur'anic studies continue to experience internal debate. No single historical-critical approach is fully agreed upon.

²² Lia Khoirotun Nisa', Abdul Mufid, and Muhammad Syaiful, "From Scriptorium to Digital Archive: The Transformation of Qur'anic Philology in the Technological Era," *Al-Munir: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* 7, no. 2 (2025): 205–224, <https://doi.org/10.24239/al-munir.v7i2.2483>.

²³ Stefanidis, "Narratives of Qur'anic Evolution," 77–84; Zulfikri, Hilma Al-Fikriah, and Mohammad Muafi Himam, "Reassessing Qur'ānic Codification: A Critical Appraisal of Nicolai Sinai's Methodology," *Quranica: International Journal of Quranic Research* 17, no. 2 (2025): 87–95, <https://doi.org/10.22452/quranica.vol17no2.30>.

Differences exist in assigning weight to manuscript data, Muslim reports, surah structure, and the context of Late Antiquity. This is important for reading Fück. If Western studies themselves are diverse and changing, then Fück should not be treated as a final authority. He should be read as part of a history of method that continues to be criticized, developed, and revised.²⁴

In Muslim contexts, openness to Western methods is often considered through the question of limits. What can be borrowed? What must be criticized? What is incompatible with the foundations of faith? These questions are legitimate because Qur'anic studies are not only academic but also connected to a believing community. The findings show that methodological borrowing must be limited to areas that can be verified: language, history, manuscripts, discourse structure, and bibliography. When a method moves toward normative judgment about the truth of revelation, researchers must state that this domain cannot be decided by philology alone.²⁵

Indonesian tafsir studies reveal opportunities for reading Fück contextually. Research on thematic tafsir, official translation, the modern tafsir of Hamka and Quraish Shihab, and scientific tafsir shows that exegetical authority in Indonesia continues to change. These changes make methodological study increasingly important. The use of a linguistic-historical approach can enrich tafsir analysis, but it must be placed alongside local scholarly traditions. Thus, Fück can function as a methodological mirror: he helps researchers see the importance of linguistic discipline, while also reminding them of the need for context, authority, and academic responsibility.²⁶

²⁴ H. Amini, R. P. Alamsyah, Dedi Masri, and Mariam Ahmed Zanan Alzahrani, "Rethinking the Qur'an's Literary Evolution: Nicolai Sinai's Approach to Inner-Qur'anic Chronology," *Mutawatir: Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadith* 14, no. 2 (December 2024): 368–391, <https://doi.org/10.15642/mutawatir.2024.14.2.368-391>.

²⁵ Zulfikri, Al-Fikriah, and Himam, "Reassessing Qur'ānic Codification," 96–105.

²⁶ Moh. Nailul Muna, "The Method of Qur'anic Exegesis in Indonesian Modern Context: A Study of Hamka's and Quraish Shihab's Thought on Trinity," *Subuf* 15, no. 1 (2022): 63–81, <https://doi.org/10.22548/shf.v15i1.700>; Lukman, "Conflicting Interests," 43–55.

This review confirms that the reading of Fück must be critical-integrative. Critical means not ignoring the background of Orientalism and its epistemological limits. Integrative means not closing off the possibility of using philological, historical, and linguistic tools as part of Qur'anic research. This stance is consistent with the needs of contemporary Islamic studies, which are increasingly interdisciplinary. Muslim researchers need not fear methods, but they must understand the assumptions that accompany them. With that understanding, methods can be used to strengthen, not weaken, academic precision in Qur'anic studies.

D. DISCUSSION

The findings show that Fück is especially important as a figure who affirmed the status of Arabic in Islamic studies. At this level, his contribution is relatively strong. It is impossible to understand the Qur'an deeply without mastery of the structure of Arabic. However, this contribution must be read alongside the fact that the Islamic tradition itself possesses rich linguistic tools. Therefore, this discussion rejects a simple dichotomy between "Western philology" and "Islamic tafsir." Both pay attention to language, but they differ in their bases of authority and purposes of reading. This difference must be explained methodologically.

Fück helps remind us that language has a history. Arabic words in the Qur'an are not static elements that can be understood only through modern translation equivalents. They have networks of usage, semantic fields, and relationships with the Arab oral tradition. In tafsir studies, this awareness corresponds to the importance of the sciences of *lughah*, *nahw*, *sarf*, and *balaghah*. Yet Fück tends to move from language toward history, while *ulum al-Qur'an* moves from revelation toward an understanding of language bound to the authority of tradition. These two directions can be brought together if researchers are able to distinguish the function of evidence from the function of faith.²⁷

The most fundamental difference between Fück's approach and the tafsir tradition does not lie in the use of language, but in the status of the

²⁷ Naguib, "The Hermeneutics of Miracle," 65–74.

source. In European philology, the text is often positioned as an object that can be analyzed from the outside. In the tafsir tradition, the text is revelation that shapes the reader's horizon. This difference does not have to make dialogue impossible. Rather, it requires transparency about the researcher's position. A Muslim researcher can use philological tools to explain linguistic structure without accepting all historical-critical assumptions that are not aligned with Islamic epistemological principles. Such transparency makes research more honest and stronger.

From a methodological perspective, this article positions Fück as part of the history of method, not as a center of truth. This position is important because studies of figures often become trapped in biographical models that excessively praise or reject the figure. A more productive study evaluates the function of ideas. In Fück's case, that function lies in the impulse to read language in a disciplined way. However, when dealing with the Qur'an, linguistic discipline must be supplemented with knowledge of *qira'at*, *rasm*, *asbab al-nuzul*, *munasabah*, and the history of tafsir. Without such additions, philology becomes too narrow.²⁸

Fück's relationship with contemporary manuscript studies shows that philology always develops. Today, researchers have access to data that many early Orientalists did not possess. Papyrus fragments, multispectral images, digital editions, and manuscript catalogs provide new possibilities for testing old hypotheses. This means that Fück's legacy must be treated dynamically. Researchers should not merely cite Fück to justify a philological approach; they must update that philology with the latest findings. Thus, Fück is more appropriately treated as a historical entry point, not as a final reference.²⁹

The development of digital philology carries another implication. Data transparency is increasingly demanded. Good Qur'anic research

²⁸ Sohaib Saeed, "The Shāhīn Affair and the Evolution of Uṣūl al-Tafsīr," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 21, no. 3 (2019): 114–128.

²⁹ Cellard, "The Ṣan'ā' Palimpsest," 11–20; Posegay, "Five Qur'anic Papyri," 111–124; Dedi Kuswandi, Abdul Rohman, and Ghazi Abdullah Muttaqien, "The Quran Manuscripts in Nusantara: A Historical Review," *Suhuf: International Journal of Islamic Studies* 36, no. 2 (2024): 227–246, <https://doi.org/10.23917/suhuf.v36i2.6513>.

needs to explain the source of the text, the way a corpus is selected, the criteria for reading variants, and the reasons for interpretation. This principle is in line with the spirit of philological precision, but technology makes it more measurable. In the Indonesian context, digitization of manuscripts and mushaf databases opens major opportunities for research that combines philology, local history, and tafsir studies. This development can become a space in which Fück's legacy is both criticized and used creatively.³⁰

Reading Fück is also relevant to Qur'anic stylistics. Stylistic research requires attention to word choice, parallelism, repetition, rhythm, metaphor, and discourse structure. Fück did not write a theory of Qur'anic stylistics in the modern sense, but his emphasis on language can serve as an initial foundation for stylistic research. The difference is that contemporary stylistics asks not only about the historical origins of linguistic forms, but also about meaning effects, communicative functions, and reader experience. By expanding philology toward stylistics, Qur'anic studies can move from formal analysis toward an understanding of aesthetic and theological functions.³¹

In relation to hermeneutics, Fück can be read as an important example of the reader's limits. Every reading arises from a particular horizon. Fück read the Qur'an from the horizon of German Arabism, while Muslim exegetes read it from the horizon of faith, tradition, and Islamic scholarly authority. Awareness of this horizon is not a reason to close dialogue, but a reason for caution. Mature hermeneutics does not erase difference, but makes it visible. Thus, the study of Fück helps

³⁰ Aqdi Rofiq Asnawi, Syukron Affani, and Zaenatul Hakamah, "Scientific Qur'anic Exegesis in Indonesia: Contributions by Scholars, Institutions, and the Government," *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 6, no. 4 (2021): 25–46, <https://doi.org/10.55831/ajis.v6i4.401>; Majid Daneshgar, "The Qur'an and Science, Part II: Scientific Interpretations from North Africa to China, Bengal, and the Malay-Indonesian World," *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 58, no. 4 (2023): 970–985, <https://doi.org/10.1111/zygo.12932>.

³¹ Stewart, "Approaches to the Investigation of Speech Genres," 17–25; Johanna Pink, "Form Follows Function: Notes on the Arrangement of Texts in Printed Qur'an Translations," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 19, no. 1 (2017): 138–150.

researchers understand that methods always carry assumptions about text, reader, and truth.³²

This article also emphasizes that criticism of Orientalism must be specific. General criticism alone is not sufficient for evaluating Fück. Researchers must show which parts of Fück's arguments are strong, which are weak, and which need to be revised by new data. This kind of criticism is more useful than total rejection. In this way, Islamic studies can appear as a confident academic tradition: able to use external tools, test assumptions, and maintain its own epistemological principles.³³

For the development of journal articles, the practical implication is clear. A manuscript on Fück must demonstrate specific novelty. Novelty is not sufficiently established by the statement that Fück remains relevant. Novelty must be visible in the way the article connects Fück with recent issues, such as digital manuscripts, Indonesian philology, or tafsir methodology. This revision locates its novelty in the critical synthesis among Fück, modern manuscript studies, and the methodological needs of Qur'anic studies in Indonesia. With this focus, the article becomes more directed and more suitable for review consideration.

Structurally, the separation of results and discussion strengthens the argument. The results section presents four themes: Fück's position in Arabist philology, the Qur'an as an Arabic text and historical document, relevance to manuscript studies and digital philology, and critical reception in contemporary Islamic studies. The discussion section then explains the meaning of these findings. This separation is important because an academic article requires not only information, but also the logic of presentation. Initial journal screening usually assesses structural completeness before evaluating substantive depth.

Overall, the reading of Fück produces an intermediate conclusion: philology is important, but inadequate if it stands alone. Philology provides discipline in relation to language; manuscripts provide material

³² Naguib, "The Hermeneutics of Miracle," 75–88.

³³ Stefanidis, "Narratives of Qur'anic Evolution," 85–93; Daneshgar, "Islamic Studies and Manuscript Cultures," 245–247.

evidence; hermeneutics provides awareness of the horizon of reading; *ulum al-Qur'an* provides the internal foundation of the Islamic tradition. These four elements can strengthen one another if their respective limits are explained. Here lies Fück's relevance for contemporary Qur'anic studies: not as a source of doctrine, but as a stimulus for building a more precise, historical, and critical methodology.

The first implication of this study is the need for an operational model when using Orientalist sources. This model can be arranged in four steps. First, researchers must identify the status of the source: whether it is a primary source, secondary study, methodological critique, or manuscript data. Second, researchers must assess the type of claim being made: descriptive, historical, linguistic, or normative. Third, researchers need to compare that claim with Muslim literature and recent academic literature. Fourth, researchers state the limits of their conclusions according to the capacity of the data. This model is important so that a famous name does not replace argumentation. In the context of Fück, these steps keep philology useful without turning it into methodological absolutism.

The second implication concerns the practice of writing journal articles. Articles on figures such as Fück should avoid overly long biographical exposition. Biography is relevant only insofar as it explains scholarly formation and methodological context. The main space should be given to analysis of ideas, textual evidence, and comparison with recent research. In this way, the article is not merely an introduction to a figure, but offers scholarly contribution. This manuscript revision is directed toward that goal: the results section no longer repeats the introduction, but organizes testable themes; the discussion section no longer simply summarizes, but assesses the meaning of the findings for Qur'anic studies.

The third implication concerns how Orientalism is discussed. Orientalism is not a single category. It includes scholars, institutions, languages, methods, colonial interests, and diverse academic practices. Therefore, Fück must be assessed historically. If criticism is directed at Orientalist bias, it must show what is problematic in the way texts are read, data are selected, or conclusions are drawn. If appreciation is given, it must also be specific, for example in relation to philological precision or

contribution to Arabist historiography. Such a stance prevents the article from becoming trapped in general rhetoric that is less productive academically.

The fourth implication is the importance of distinguishing between historical description and theological belief. Fück can help explain how Arabic became a field of scholarly study. However, that explanation need not be used to assess the ontological status of revelation. In an academic article, the domain that can be examined by method must be separated from the domain of faith that is not settled by philology. This separation is not the secularization of research, but discipline in limiting claims. With such boundaries, the article can speak to academic readers across traditions without suggesting that linguistic data automatically determine theological conclusions.

The fifth implication relates to Qur'anic stylistics. The study of Fück can enrich stylistics if it is used as a basis for paying serious attention to linguistic form. However, Qur'anic stylistics is not sufficient if it merely traces the origin of words or historical relationships among traditions. It must also explain structural effects, expressive beauty, sound intensity, repetition patterns, and rhetorical functions in the communication of revelation.³⁴ Therefore, philology must move toward stylistic analysis. In this context, further research can place Fück as a methodological background and then develop analysis of a specific surah or theme.

The sixth implication concerns Nusantara manuscript studies. Research on Qur'anic manuscripts in Indonesia opens a space not fully touched by classical Arabist traditions. Nusantara mushafs have features

³⁴ Nur Huda et al., "Repetition Style in Surah Al-Shu'arā," *Indonesian Journal of Arabic Studies* 6, no. 1 (June 2024): 17–36, <https://doi.org/10.24235/ijas.v6i1.16594>; Nur Huda, "Uslūb Al-Tikrār Fī Sūrah Al-Muawizatain," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Literature and Muslim Society* 5, no. 1 (2020): 67–88, <https://doi.org/10.22515/islimus.v5i1.2393>; Abdul Ghofur, Nur Huda, and Ali Ja'far, "Stylistic Analysis of Surah Al-Zalzalah," *ALSINATUNA* 6, no. 2 (2021): 187–203, <https://doi.org/10.28918/alsinatuna.v7i2.3575>; Nur Huda and Ihsan Sa'dudin, "Stylistica of Maulid Simtud Durar's Repetition Created by Habib Ali Bin Muhammad Husein Al-Habsyi," *Jurnal Al Bayan: Jurnal Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 11, no. 2 (2019): 232–53, <https://doi.org/10.24042/albayan.v11i2.4815>.

of illumination, rasm, punctuation, and social context that differ from Middle Eastern manuscripts. If Fück's approach is developed in Indonesia, its focus should not be limited to the history of Arabic in Europe, but should also include the local history of Qur'anic transmission. In this way, philology does not become an imported project, but a tool for reading the local Islamic heritage more carefully and responsibly.

The seventh implication concerns digitization. In recent years, digital humanities have created new possibilities for Qur'anic research, but they also carry the risk of simplification. A search engine can find words quickly, but it does not automatically understand grammatical function, verse context, or the history of readings. Therefore, researchers who use digital corpora still need expertise in language and textual theory. Fück is relevant here because he reminds us that mastery of language is foundational. Yet this foundation must be supplemented by digital literacy so that researchers can use big data without losing interpretive precision.

E. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Johann Wilhelm Fück's view of the Qur'an can primarily be understood through a philological-historical framework. Fück places Arabic as the main entry point for understanding Islamic texts and the history of Arab civilization. In the context of Qur'anic studies, this emphasis provides a methodological contribution because it reminds researchers of the importance of careful reading of words, structures, and linguistic contexts. However, Fück's approach cannot be made a single authority because it emerged from European Orientalism, which has epistemological assumptions different from those of the Islamic exegetical tradition.

The findings show that Fück's legacy remains relevant when it is read critically and expanded through recent developments. Manuscript studies, paleography, codicology, digital philology, genre studies, and Indonesian tafsir show that philology now moves more broadly than linguistic analysis alone. Material evidence and digital data provide space for retesting old hypotheses. Therefore, Fück needs to be placed as part of the history of method, not as the final determinant of scientific truth about the Qur'an.

This article also emphasizes that the use of Orientalist sources in Qur'anic studies requires a critical-integrative stance. Critical means recognizing the limits, biases, and context in which an approach emerged. Integrative means being willing to use beneficial tools, such as philological precision and linguistic history, as long as they do not ignore *ulum al-Qur'an* and the *tafsir* tradition. This stance enables Qur'anic studies in Muslim academic settings to develop openly without losing their epistemological foundation.

For future research, the study of Fück can be expanded through archival study, direct reading of all of his German-language works, and comparison with other Arabist figures such as Nöldeke, Bergsträsser, and Jeffery. Further research can also test the application of the philological approach to a specific Qur'anic theme, such as lexical variation, repetition, or rhetorical structure. Thus, discussion of Fück does not stop at the history of a figure, but develops into an operational methodology for contemporary Qur'anic studies.

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