

**AL-MUTAKHAYYAL WA AL-TARIKHI: AN APPROACH IN UNDERSTANDING  
ASBAB AL-NUZUL BASSAM JAMAL'S PERSPECTIVE**

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**Abstract:** This research aims to examine Bassam Jamal's thoughts on understanding *asbab al-nuzul*, the imaginative approach (*al-mutakhayyal*) and critical historical narrative (*at-tarikh*) to open the reader's horizons in reading the text and its context so that it can be accepted by reason. The research method used is library research. The primary data source is Bassam Jamal's work "*asbab al-nuzul*", while the secondary data sources are books, journals, and other scientific writings related to the study of *asbab al-nuzul*. The results of the research show that the narrative of *Asbab al-Nuzul* in an imaginary form that penetrates human reason, and logic has an important relationship with myth from an anthropological point of view. From the symbolic aspect, it reveals the similarities between imagination and myth, thus requiring the determination of the meaning of symbols from an anthropological point of view. In this case, the imaginative approach is very important as a model for reading anthropological exploration. Meanwhile, news that has historical references and determines its status in the science of the causes of revelation then monitors the impact of the cultural framework and cognitive context on the perceptions of Al-Qur'an scholars, biographers, mystery writers, and historians about what is history. in the news the cause of the revelation. With this approach, instead of reading the Qur'an through the lens of *asbab al-nuzul* literature, the *asbab al-nuzul* literature will be read through the lens of the Qur'an, so the importance of the historical-critical approach as a model for reading historical exploration.

**Keywords:** *asbab al-nuzul*, imaginary, *al-mutakhayyal*, *at-tarikhi*

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**INTRODUCTION**

So far, *asbab al-nuzul* has been understood as a reality that makes the stimulus for the birth of verses. It is as if the verse is a response that must be lowered according to the social context of that time. From here, Basyam Jamal understands that *asbab al-nuzul* is like a space of imagination whose existence is very abstract cannot be swept away by human reason, which

should be able to digest the space of imagination (B. Jamal, 2005). Meanwhile, the descending verse is inseparable from the context of the verse and the context of society at that time (Al Amin & Baidan, 2023; Andriyani & Mubarak, 2022; Yusuff et al., 2019). Instead, both bring up and support the presence of history. Thus, *asbab al-nuzul* is indeed inseparable from the imagination and history that is the *background* of the verse and can be accepted by human reason.

The tendency of the ancients to spread the entire history of the reasons for the descent of revelation that was of concern to them, made them keep news that might seem to some Muslims to be skeptical. The reason is that several hadiths contain things that affirm the reality of the human side in the life of the Prophet and his companions in a way that is very contrary to the ancient Muslims' description of the community of companions at that time. This is a phenomenon caused by the overlap of information and the level of awareness in understanding the *asbab al-nuzul*.

The narrative of *asbab al-nuzul* depends heavily on the way the reader reads the text. Narratives of *asbab al-nuzul* that are in accordance with their interpretation will be accepted, referred to, and sometimes even used as evidence of the correctness of the chosen interpretation. In Bassam Jamal's view, if the *narrative of asbab al-nuzul* is '*contrary to the meaning projected by the interpreter*', then the *narrative of asbab al-nuzul* will then be rejected (B. Jamal, 2005). Interpreters who maintain the universality of Qur'anic discourse are motivated by the need to keep its legal power and authority intact. The claim that a particular verse should be confined to its original state (as mentioned in *the narrative of asbab al-nuzul*) appears only occasionally as a justification for existing legal practice. The presence of an imaginative approach (*al-mutakhayyal*) and a critical historic narrative (*at-date*) opens the reader's horizons in reading the text and its context so that it can be accepted by human reason.

According to Hanafi, it is impossible to understand the text without understanding the initial problems and solutions after the text is codified. Text without a situation is the same as a form without content. The tendency is *that the asbab al-nuzul* is the priority part of the reality of the idea rather than the idea itself, so that the text is a process of documenting the situation and categorizing the times (Hassan, 2015). One of the characters of the Qur'anic text, he intertexts with previous texts, such as the Torah, Inzil, verse and *khihanah*/prophecy. By intertexting, the *narrative of asbab al-nuzul* will not come out of the cultural reality where the text is present. It is reality that forms the text, the cultural language forms the conception (*mafahim*), interacting with humans is the renewal of its meaning (*dalalah*). While in Arkoun's view is like Abu Zayd's, the anthropological exploration approach is intended to look for the final clues through mythological theories by involving the language used. Texts contain references to origins (*asbab al-nuzul*) that relate to previous texts (intertextuality) (Arkoun, 1997). However, understanding and interpreting the ethical and legal content of the Qur'an and relating its content to the changing needs and circumstances of Muslims today, it is important to approach the text on a different level, by providing a better understanding (Saeed, 2008).

Continuing the existing scholarship, this study will examine Basyam Jamal's understanding in elaborating important components in detecting *the narrative of asbab al-nuzul*, especially reflecting *the world view* and beliefs of the early Arab people. In contrast to previous studies that presented contextualization and historical studies by not touching the issue of collective imagination, this paper shows that the approach in understanding *asbab al-nuzul*

must be understood from an imaginative and historical critical approach in finding *a reasonable and factual* narrative of *asbab al-nuzul*.

This paper argues that anthropological studies of the formation of myths and *imaginaries*, the significance and function of supernatural beings are typical and considers them as *actors* who perform certain functions in *the collective* imagination. Thus, Bassam Jamal tries to elaborate on the narrative of *asbab al-nuzul* from two points of view, namely the narrative of *asbab al-nuzul* which is imaginative (*al-mutakhayyal*) and the narrative of critical historis (*at-date*). However, this is a research gap that is not widely studied by other researchers.

The formulation of the problem in this study questions how to approach imaginatively in reading anthropological exploration texts? and what is the historical-critical approach in reading historical exploration texts? Meanwhile, the purpose of the research is to analyse the imaginative approach in reading anthropological exploration texts, as well as to analyse the critical historical approach in reading historical exploration texts in *asbab al-nuzul*. This research is expected to have positive implications for the development of *the study of asbab al-nuzul*, especially as an interpreting tool that does not focus on the histories of the companions but uses it through an imaginative and historical-critical approach, so that interpreting activities still remain in the orbit of the goal of *shalihun likulli during the era of food*.

## METHOD

The research method used is *library research*. The literature research conducted examines the thinking of the characters through their written works through a descriptive-analytical approach (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Sugiono, 2015). The type of data used is qualitative data, with primary and secondary data sources. The primary source of data is Bassam Jamal's work entitled *Asbab Al-Nuzul*, while the secondary data source is taken from other intellectual works in books, journals, and other scientific writings related to *asbab al-Nuzul*.

The data collection techniques carried out are observation and documentation. Observation was carried out to observe problems in understanding and applying *asbab al-nuzul* as well as materials in finding solutions to provide *a contribution of knowledge* for Islamic studies. Meanwhile, documentation is carried out to strengthen the search for data, so that the data taken is really maintained in its validity. The data analysis carried out is qualitative data analysis, first the data is collected, selected and sorted and then interpreted to produce the results of the analysis needed in the research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Imaginative Approach; Anthropological Exploratory Reading Model

The Qur'an is realized by all Muslims and was revealed to Muhammad Saw gradually. Every time the Qur'an comes down, of course there is a reality and context that surrounds it. Since the Prophet existed, Muslims are not confused and it is not difficult to find an interpretation of the verse, because they can face the Prophet Muhammad directly as the recipient of revelation. Meanwhile, the problem is how to interpret the Qur'an when the age of revelation is very far

from the age of today's interpreters. This is the basis for the importance of interpreting the Qur'an through various relevant disciplines.

In interpreting the Qur'an, of course, a historical basis is needed that can provide a positive stimulus in interpreting the Qur'an, so that the interpretation is not wild. *Asbab al-nuzul* as a raw material in interpreting the Qur'an, its role is very important in interpreting the Qur'an (Abnisa, 2023; Dzulhadi, 2017; K. Jamal et al., 2022). Although it is easy to find a connection between *nash* and *social* settings (Al Amin & Baidan, 2023). *The social setting* in question is a dimension that can be explored anthropologically by humans. An important part of this dimension is the collective human imagination in providing a view of the *setting* in question. According to Saeed, the literal and standard interpretation of the Qur'an not only violates this tradition, but without reference to the context and *social setting*, often results in an incomplete interpretation and is not in accordance with the ideas, values, and context of modern culture (Saeed, 2008).

Imagination is the anthropological dimension of human beings, and at the same time shows an integrated structure that fits into the psychological makeup of individuals and collectives. This allows us to understand a deeper mechanism of how it works. Imagination usually refers to the belief of early societies as an unchangeable reality. An important component in the creation of this narrative mainly reflects the worldview and beliefs of the early people. Refers to the study of anthropology about the formation of myths and *imaginary*.

Basyam Jamal tried to identify the significance and function of typical supernatural beings (such as angels and Satan) and considered them as *actors* performing certain functions in the collective *imagination*. In addition, the narrative of *asbab al-nuzul* which contains supernatural phenomena, such as the splitting of the moon (*inshiqaq al-qamar*) and the fall of rain immediately after the Prophet's prayer is a matter of historical reality in the minds of early peoples and must therefore be approached with appropriate anthropological sophistication (B. Jamal, 2005).

The imagination presented by the Arab community is in line with the revelation that regulates the actions of the Prophet. Of course, it is appropriate that this imagination is attached to historical reality rather than historical events themselves. Therefore, imagination nourishes a person and motivates him to move. Because humans are the creators of the symbolic world, texts that are products of imagination can attract the interest of news recipients about the reason for the descent of revelation. The imaginary in these narrations does not take the text of the Qur'an except as a formal reference, which the commentators and scholars consider as a clear reason to weave whatever story they wish to weave and to create narratives that are in the sources and not in other sources, through which they reveal the characteristics that represent the prophetic stage and the characteristics of the model of Muhammad, that they built in their imagination, and of course it is the model of Muhammad in the Qur'an. But our investigation of the imagination does not mean that nothing draws its connection with the reasons for the descent of the revelation into historical reality, both in the relationship of the Companions with each other and the relationship of the Muslims with other Quraish polytheists on the one hand, and with the People of the Book on the other.

The historical corpus allows Muslims in later life to understand how the Qur'an is presented contextually through the events in Muhammad's life. This allowed Muslims in the eighth century onwards to access Muhammad's sunnah as an authoritative and seemingly

timeless "precedent" regarding how to live, practice Islam, and engage with God's revelation (Archer et al., 2021). The function of imagination that can connect the reality of the past with today can be internalized in logic. Because the collective imagination has its own power, because it is born from collective agreement in looking at things, in this case Muhammad as the recipient of revelation and all the realities that surround it.

The imaginary then goes into its own internal reason and logic, because what we currently call imagination is a rational pattern that we may no longer be able to understand because we have eliminated it from our attention. Because all cultures have their own imagination. In Jamal's eyes, imagination has an important relationship with myths from an anthropological point of view. In terms of symbolic aspects, it reveals that there is a similarity factor between imagination and myth, so it requires determining the meaning of symbols from an anthropological point of view (B. Jamal, 2005).

The components that are used as imagination in *asbab al-nuzul* are about the existence of Gabriel, Satan, and the elements of natural events. Gabriel is mentioned by his explicit name in three verses of Medina. The Qur'an calls him by other names such as Ruh in QS. Ash-Shura 42:52, Holy Spirit in QS. Al-Baqarah 2:87, and the Spirit That Can Be Trusted in QS. Ash-Shu'ara' 26:193 (B. Jamal, 2005). In the form of Gabriel, through the reporting of the reasons for the descent of revelation, so that we can understand the role it plays and determine its value in religion. Perhaps the most important thing to note in this news is that Gabriel was only an image of an angel unknown to Muhammad's soul, so he felt trembling and cold prevail over him, as in history receiving the first revelation.

The Islamic imagination of Gabriel based on this news shows him as an imam who guided the Prophet, taught him how to perform ablution and prayer, and greeted him in clear Arabic. The point is that in the first stage of receiving the message, the Prophet needed an agent to test his obedience to God's commands and obedience to Him before he was assigned to deliver the call making Gabriel the spokesman.

Gabriel was the Prophet's *ijtihad* guide and his assistant Imagination to save the Prophet from some of his failed *ijtihad* before carrying it out. In this context, we find Gabriel giving advice and assistance to the Prophet when he decided to confront the Banu Qurayza, but this was difficult for him because they took refuge in their fortress. The image of Gabriel in the Islamic imagination is not limited to his original role as a messenger of God's word to the Messenger, but other functions assigned to him beyond the requirements of the treatise. From here, the context of the narrative is important to provide an explanation of the true meaning (Rippin, 1988).

The task of the imagination in explaining the reasons for the descent of revelation is to monitor the most important functions performed by the imagination based on of the facts in which the law of causality has been abolished, our investigation of delusion does not mean that it cannot draw the news of the reasons for the descent of revelation into historical reality. The common thread that can be drawn from the role and function of imagination in *the narrative of asbab al-nuzul* is as long as the imagination can be accepted by reason. If it is paradoxical with the reason and context of society when the revelation was revealed, the narrative of *asbab al-nuzul* in question is difficult to use as an exegesis tool of the Qur'an.

Another example is rain/imagery which is a cosmic symbol that carries many connotations that reach the point of contrast between fertility and destruction. Water is the first

principle from which all living organisms emerge. This is because myths that consider water as the first principle that is the origin of everything in the universe are found in many civilizations, including the Mesopotamian and Greek civilizations, as well as Hebrew myths, as listed in the first chapter of the Bible. As long as. In essence, the heavy rain is a direct answer to the prayer of the Prophet, which reveals an extraordinary deed that has the status of Islamic imagination as an event that occurs in historical reality. Then the anthropological race that is the place where this imagination descends makes the rain that falls in a barren spatial context a dream that is desired and constantly updated. The ultimate purpose of reporting the reason for the descent of revelation is to highlight the miracle because of the absence of objective causes on the one hand and the speed with which the request is fulfilled on the other. The story (of the miracle) becomes unimportant, because the narrator of the news has no identity (narrated), no place is mentioned, there is no identity of the names of the companions who accompanied the Prophet, and there is no information. Because they left without bringing water. with them.

The fact is that the delusions in these narrations do not take the text of the Qur'an except as a formal reference, which the commentators and scholars of the Qur'an consider as a clear reason to weave whatever story they want to weave and to create narratives that are in the sources and not in other sources, through which they reveal the characteristics that represent the prophetic stage and the characteristics of the model of Muhammad, that they built in their imagination, and of course it is the model of Muhammad in the Qur'an.

In short, the essence of Jammal's understanding of *asbab al-nuzul* through the imagination approach is important to pay attention to several things, including: (1) there are historical facts. Each *asbab al-nuzul* is truly factual and has a verifiable historical context. Because this historical fact further strengthens the urgency of *asbab al-nuzul* as an exegesis tool that as used by the philosophers, (2) makes sense. Every narrative of *asbab al-nuzul* must be reasonable, this is characterized by imagination that is interpreted with linguistic skills that can be understood by human reason. The more linguistic forms presented in *the narrative of asbab al-nuzul*, the stronger the narrative will be used in solving problems in interpreting the Qur'an and (3) collective imagination is used as a basic material in determining verses. The collective imagination becomes a common agreement in describing what things it agrees on, of course this is because it is part of *the inherent Arabs. This collective imagination also shows the understanding of the Arabs in assessing and agreeing on something that is in accordance with their reason at that time, so that there is a tendency to have positive values and a strong consensus in determining something.*

### **Historical-Critical Approach; Reading Texts Through Historical Exploration**

The Qur'an with its sentences and intentions contains high literature, further leading to *cognitive intellectual efforts* in understanding it. History is presented with a language style and *social setting* that is *mujmal*, it is important to explore through relevant disciplines. One of the tools that will be used to know and clarify the meaning of the Qur'an correctly is to take a careful approach in order to recognize the atmosphere of revelation and *the narrative of asbab al-nuzul* (the reason for the revelation) and analyse it correctly. Most of our acceptance and rejection are based on the narrative of *asbab al-nuzul*. The point of view is that this narrative should be evaluated according to the content of the Qur'an, hadith methods, narrative patterns, and

alignment with prophetic biographies (Kilincli, 2019). One of the approaches that is considered relevant to the viewpoint in question is the historical-critical approach (Öztürk, 2015; Riyani & Huriani, 2017).

In this Historical approach, Basyam Jamal begins with two subjects, namely alluding to the position of substance that rests on the premise that God's messenger is an established party (relationship with the Quraish and the Jews of Medina), and the evidence of the life of the Prophet and his companions (B. Jamal, 2005). Exploring these two topics allows us to identify some of the events that caused the descent of revelation that most likely occurred in historical reality at the time of the descent of revelation. Perhaps the tendency of the ancients to spread the entire history of the reasons for the descent of revelation that was of concern to them, made them keep news that might seem unacceptable to some Muslims. In situations like these, Martin tends to be on par with Jamal, the importance of the situation of the speaker and the recipient is determined by historical circumstances that can be explained and analysed by literary, historical, or sociolinguistic methods (Martin, 1982).

In practice, Basyam Jamal looks at news that has historical references and determines its status in the science of the cause of revelation, then monitors the impact of the cultural framework and cognitive context on the perception of Qur'an scholars, biographers, mystery writers, and historians about what is historical in the news that causes the descent of revelation. With this approach, instead of reading the Qur'an through the lens of *asbab al-nuzul* literature, while *asbab al-nuzul literature* will be read through the lens of the Qur'an. While there may be an element of historical truth in this narrative, it is almost impossible to distinguish this from most of the material it possesses. For one thing, the form in which matter survives is fraught with problems with traces of modification and proven invention. In addition, the form in which we have received the Qur'an (i.e. *mushaf*) does not correspond to the nature of discourse.

According to al-Jamal, the only possible way to detect whether this narrative qualifies as history is to critically analyse all narratives associated with a single verse and examine whether the narrative makes sense given the 1st/7th century Arab context (B. Jamal, 2005). Historical background information is important to learn how the Qur'an shaped the society in which the Qur'an was revealed, how the Qur'an intervened in it, and what criteria were considered when doing so (Sak, 2022).

*The narrative of asbab al-nuzul* may actually contain historical content (Farhah, 2022; Sak, 2022). An example is a narrative that corresponds to the literature of its substance, a narrative that contains references to the Prophet's struggle with the Meccans and the three Jewish tribes in Medina. A further example is the narrative that connects the behaviour of the Prophet, his wife and companions, emphasizing their character. The news about Al-Maghzi, in the story of the causes of revelation, is caused by at least two things, the first is what is drawn about the relationship between the beginning of the formation of the knowledge of the causes of revelation and the second is the involvement of the informants in the war of the Prophet as they represent them.

One of the human phenomena that is linked to historical facts is the history of Al-Miqdad bin Al-Aswad being in a group, when they crossed paths with a man who was carrying his spoils and wanted to kill him. He said: Is there a God besides, Allah? so Al-Miqdad killed him. It was said to him: Did you kill him, and he said: There is no God but Allah? He wanted to flee with his family and money, so when they went to the Messenger of Allah (peace and

blessings of Allaah be upon him), they mentioned it to him, and it was revealed: "*O you who believe! If you go (fight) in the way of Allah, then search and do not say to the person who says "salam" to you, "You are not a believer," (and you kill him), with the intention of seeking the treasures of the world, when in the sight of Allah there are many treasures. So it is your situation first, and then Allah gives you His favor, so be careful. Indeed, Allah is meticulous in what you do.*" (An-Nisa: No. 94). The attachment of the Companions of the Prophet to the spoils which they could obtain in wars and campaigns led some of them to commit crimes against a Muslim who did not commit a sin that would have resulted in the loss of his life. This example is an example among other examples of the role of spoils in the involvement of believers in "jihad".

The ancients treated the text of the book differently. Some of them mention it in its entirety, others limit themselves to mentioning only a part, and some are completely silent. If we look at the news of the reason for the revelation related to the Battle of Uhud (Shawwal/3 AH), we see that the news discusses aspects of the relationship between Muslims and the Quraish in this event, which was agreed upon by the scholars of the past, most of which are included in Surah Ali Imran. So, it is clear that the intention and purpose that a mufasir has for a work also has an impact on how the interpretation is actually formed (Burge, 2015).

These views suggest that there is open space for individual evaluation of the causes of revelation and that most of these narrations are not the actual reasons for revelation. The narration of *asbab al-nuzul* in this interpretation shows that the provisions of these verses are not limited to the party to whom they are directly addressed, but cover all people within that scope (Kilincli, 2019). It can be argued that the narrators and scholars of the commentary are not historians in the true sense, and therefore they do not critically investigate the histories of the reasons for the descent of revelation, or are almost limited to broadcasting important news sources that reveal their affiliation with the great, historically and culturally prosperous Islam (Farhah, 2022). There is no doubt that the ways in which they present historical events, concealments and exclusions. Several of stories about the reasons for the descent of revelation have a historical origin, but what is embedded in the minds of ancient people is that all material about the reasons for the descent of revelation is included in historical reality. Therefore, events that do not fall into the category of established history among us are the same historical truths according to the ancients.

The narrations made about the cause of the descent of revelation have an important role in the correct understanding of some verses of the Qur'an and the introduction of such narratives reveals many verses (Dashti et al., 2019). Likewise, the reason for the descent of revelation explains what really happened in history in the time of Muhammad. This needs to be clarified by studying the relationship between the reasons for the revelation and the war on the one hand, and the aspects of the life of the Prophet and his companions on the other. It can be said that the narrators and scholars of the Qur'an are not historians in the true sense, and therefore they do not critically investigate the histories of the reasons for the descent of revelation or almost exclusively broadcast important news sources that reveal their affiliation with the glorious Islam, historically and culturally. Several of stories about the reasons for the descent of revelation have a historical origin, but what is embedded in the minds of ancient people is that all material about the reasons for the descent of revelation is included in historical reality. Therefore, events that do not fall into the category of established history among us are the same historical truths according to the ancients. Even so, *the jarh wa ta'dil* approach is very important



in tracing the narrator's profile in narrating the history and culture that surrounds *asbab al-nuzul*.

In short, Jamal tries to question the credibility of the narrator in informing/narrating the narrative of *asbab al-nuzul*. Because *asbab al-nuzul* is the information/history of the companions about the reality that occurred, it is important to trace its narration with the *jarh wa ta'dil approach*. The credibility of the narrator is a reference in determining the strength of the information he narrates. Because it is feared that if the history of *asbab al-nuzul* does not match the context and reality of the text, then the substance of the text will change and can even move away from its meaning. Nevertheless, meaning must be obtained objectively, so that the significance can be derived from it more validly. But significance should not damage meaning, because significance provides space for subjectivity for the reader.

## CONCLUSION

The narrative of *asbab al-nuzul* depends heavily on the way the reader reads the text. Narratives of *asbab al-nuzul* that are in accordance with their interpretation will be accepted, referred to, and sometimes even used as evidence of the correctness of the chosen interpretation. In Jamal's view, not all *asbab al-nuzul* as written by experts in his work can be used as a tool in interpreting the Qur'an, one of the ways that can be used as a detection of the narrative that emerges is by critically analysing whether the narrative present is reasonable and in accordance with the context of Arab society at that time. Remembering, the context of the Arabs in the 1st century or the 7th year of the Hijri is important to explore. So that the Qur'an can become a living discourse and communication "*shalihun likulli zaman wa makan*". In understanding the *asbab al-nuzul* through an imaginative and historical approach, it is important to pay attention to several things, including: (1) there are historical facts. Each *asbab al-nuzul* factual and has a verifiable historical context, (2) it makes sense. Every narrative of *asbab al-nuzul* must be reasonable, this is characterized by imagination that is spoken with linguistic skills that can be understood by human reason, and (3) collective imagination is used as a basic material in determining verses, (4) there is a history that is in accordance with the reality that occurs. The historical approach is used as a basis as *a cross check* of existing information, of course using *the jarh wa ta'dil approach* as a form of confirmation of the credibility of what is narrated.

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