

# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH

Volume 1 Nomor 2 Tahun 2023 Page: 119-132

E-ISSN: 3025-9681, P-ISSN: 3026-3891

Submission: 18 November 2023, Revision: 11 December 2023, Publication: 30 December 2023

---

## PATRICIA CRONE'S CRITICAL NOTES ON THE CHRONOLOGICAL DISCOURSE ON THE AL-QUR'AN IN MECCA

Al Amirul Fitriana Dewi<sup>1\*</sup>, Inayah Rohmaniyah<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> *UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta*

e-mail: [amirulfitrianaadewi@gmail.com](mailto:amirulfitrianaadewi@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

*This article will reveal the epistemological basis of Patricia Crone's view that Mecca is not a center for international trade and a place for the distribution of the Koran. This study is qualitative research that uses document data sources or what is also called library research. The results of the research by Patricia Crone indicate 3 different aspects in studying the originality of the chronology of the decline of the Al-Qur'an. First, in a skeptical manner, Crone suggests that the chronology of the revelation of the Koran is more appropriate to pin it down in Iraq rather than in Mecca. Second, his thoughts were obtained from non-Muslim sources which ultimately outlined contradictory thoughts which were inversely proportional to the Makkiyah and Madaniyah Qur'an surah groups. Third, the social situation when the Koran was revealed was not in a primitive society, as is generally described in the Traditionalist school of thought, but in a society that was more advanced, more philosophical and sophisticated. This research requires refinement and is expected to provide new insights in future research.*

**Keywords:** Critical Notes; Patricia Crone Thoughts; Chronology of the Qur'an

### **Abstrak**

Tulisan ini akan mengungkap dasar epistemologis pandangan Patricia Crone yang menganggap Mekkah bukan sebagai pusat perdagangan internasional dan tempat penyebaran Al-Qur'an. Riset ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif yang menggunakan sumber data yang bersifat dokumen atau yang disebut juga studi pustaka (library research). Hasil dari penelitian bahwa kajian Patricia Crone tersebut mengisyaratkan 3 aspek yang berbeda dalam mengkaji orisinalitas kronologi turunnya Al-Qur'an. Pertama, secara skeptis, Crone mengisyaratkan kronologi turunnya Al-Qur'an lebih sesuai disematkan turun di Iraq daripada di Makkah. Kedua, Pemikirannya yang demikian diperoleh dari sumber-sumber non-muslim yang akhirnya menjabarkan pemikiran yang kontradiktif yang berbanding terbalik dengan golongan surah Qur'an Makkiyah dan Madaniyah. Ketiga, Situasi sosial saat al-Qur'an diturunkan juga tidaklah pada masyarakat primitif, sebagaimana gambaran umum versi mazhab Tradisionalis, tetapi masyarakat

yang sudah lebih maju, lebih filosofis dan sophisticated. Penelitian ini memerlukan penyempurnaan dan diharapkan dapat memberikan pandangan yang baru dalam penelitian mendatang.

**Kata kunci:** Catatan Kritis; Pemikiran Patricia Crone; Kronologi al-Qur'an

## INTRODUCTION

Muslim scholars such as Muhammad bin Ishaq bin Yasar attribute Mecca's selection as the place of the Qur'an's decline to its reputation as a strategic trading center because it was located at the crossroads of North-South trade routes. However, Patricia Crone, influenced by the thought of John Wansbrough, argued that Mecca at that time was not an important center of international trade (Patricia Crone, 1987:115). Patricia Crone says that Makkah was only a local trading center with no connection to the place where the Qur'an was revealed, due to its position in the hinterland (Ismail, 1999:198). On the other hand, because of its location in the hinterland, Makkah has limited natural resources that can sustain a large population (Serjeant, 1990:472). Makkah has a close relationship between its status as a trading center

and the place where the Qur'an was revealed. As a trading center, Makkah became a meeting point between merchants from various regions who brought influence in the spread of Islam.

The existing studies on the historicity of the Qur'an according to Patricia Crone, so far there are three relevant studies. First, it is a study that examines the interpretation of Patricia Crone's thought on surat Al-Quraysh (Ismail, 1999:104). As presented in the research of Ismail shows Crone can not interpret the word *ilaf* in surat Al-Quraysh specifically. So for Crone, the Quraish letter cannot be used as a source that Islam entered through trade routes. Second, a study of Patricia Crone's book *God's Caliph*. The book deals with the history of religious authority in the early days of Islam. Third, Ghazali Mahbub (2020) Study, which focuses on revealing about the Mecca

trade and the emergence of Islam according to Montgomery Watt and Patricia Crone. The study exposed Crone's contention that the trade of Mecca was not an important factor explaining the emergence of Islam. These studies suggest that the study of Patricia Crone's critical record of thought in the chronological discourse of the Qur'an in Mecca does not yet exist.

The position of this study then complements the shortcomings of the studies that have been carried out above. This study will show a critical account of the chronology of the Qur'an in Makkah from the point of view of Patricia Crone. This study will answer at least three questions that are the subject of discussion. First, the form of the chronology of the descent of the Qur'an in the period of Mecca according to the view of Patricia Crone. Second, the structure of Crone's critical account of the chronology of the Qur'an's descent into the Meccan period. Third, the implications of Crone's thinking about the chronology of the descent of the Qur'an during the Meccan period.

The study of the historical development of the Qur'an in the city of international trade according to Patricia Crone's view is important because it can provide an explanation for the differences of opinion between Orientalists. Mecca, which became the residence and residence of the Prophet Muhammad, experienced progress in the economic field through the concept of trade taught by the Prophet.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

A review of previous studies relevant to this study is needed to compare and position this study in addition to other studies. Found research from Muhammad Farid Abdullah on Patricia Crone's interpretation of Surat Al-Quraysh in 2019. The study revealed the side of Crone's thinking that was more focused on gathering information from interpreters (the Qur'an) and then expressing rejection of the opinion because of differences in understanding. Then, another study by Zunaidi Nur in 2023 on the chronology of the Qur'an of the Meccan period (Internal analysis of

Theodor Noldeke's text). The study is inversely related to this study which brought Western scholars such as Theodor Noldeke to the attention of those who sought to reconstruct chronologically the Surah or verse of the Qur'an. In addition, Ghazali Mahbub (2020) study focused on revealing the Mecca trade and the emergence of Islam according to Montgomery Watt and Patricia Crone. The study exposed Crone's contention that the trade of Mecca was not an important factor explaining the emergence of Islam.

The study of the three studies above is a bit of some other previous research. The above three studies show that the existence of the thought of Western scholars such as Patricia Crone and Theodor Noldeke deserves critical and tolerant attention. That not all non-muslim Western scholars ' thoughts can be justified, but that does not mean that their research should also be rejected. Patricia Crone's thought is often discussed is about the doubt on the legitimacy of the city of Mecca as a major source of international trade.

The researcher concluded that he doubted this because as a revisionist, Crone rejected all Islamic sources because they were considered too many fabrications and myths that were not based on historical facts that happened or could be said to be based only on imaginary stories of the people of Makkah at that time.

While Theodor Noldeke thought also mentioned that the chronology of the descent of the Qur'an doubts the historical revelation in the city of Mecca. He also explained that the number of historical accounts in the Makkah period is very limited and historically these data are of doubtful validity and in general they are more concerned with historical events that do not provide much important information in reconstructing the chronology of the Qur'an.

These studies suggest that the study of Patricia Crone's critical record of thought in the chronological discourse of the Qur'an in Mecca does not yet exist.

## RESEARCH METHODS

Explore some aspects of the focus of this study, the approach used by this study using qualitative literature and documentation studies that make it easier for authors to collect relevant data. The data collected were analyzed exploratorically (digging), explanatory (explaining), and descriptive (writing) the validity of the data obtained from the triangulation of several literature sources.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Biography Of Patricia Crone

Before examining the critical notes of Crone's opinion further, the background of Patricia Crone's figure will be discussed. Patricia Crone is an academic who belongs to the revisionist sect of orientalists. Patricia Crone is an Orientalist. He was one of the scientists who conducted research on the history of Makkah. He is also a professor of Islamic history at Oxford University. Crone is a professor of Islamic history at the School of Historical Studies,

Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton.

Crone's work as a material object of study using the analysis of historical criticism. In addition, he is known as one of the Orientalists who used his own artificial dating in carrying out research. For example, the first historian to attribute Makkah's trade as a major cause for the development of Islam is Watt. Crone's most famous works are "Mecca Trade and the Rise of Islam" and "the Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran".

### **The chronology of The Descent of the Qur'an in the Meccan period according to Patricia Crone**

The background of his thinking is that the discussion of the development of Islam through trade, if associated with the opinions of Crone raises interesting things. Mecca which was considered as a trading center in pre-Islamic times was rejected raw by The Crone. As a refutation of Watt's theory that says that Mecca is a trading center city with an international scale. Crone

considers that this statement is completely wrong because Mecca is a small city that is unlikely to serve as a center of International Trade. Crone's studies of the Qur'an show that he was influenced by the views of John Wansbrough, who held that the Qur'an, as the primary source of Islam, was not revealed in Mecca and Medina but came from Iraq or Mesopotamia.

When the Qur'an was revealed in the city of Makkah, it does not mean that the city is a meaningless or empty place. Before the advent of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula, the Arabs were known for their economic progress. This means that there was an Arab civilization before the arrival of Islam. This is due to Mecca's strategic location at the crossroads of trade routes between North and South, particularly Syria and Yemen. As a result, Mecca developed as the religious center of Arab society and gained fame outside the Arab region. Before the Qur'an was revealed in Makkah, the city already had an advanced Arab civilization and

functioned as a trade center (Carimokam, 2010:59).

Nevertheless, Patricia Crone, who is famous for her research on the study of the Qur'an, has a special view on the chronology of the descent of the Qur'an. He argued that "the existence of the Qur'an is largely derived from the literary and religious literature that came from various groups of Arab society at that time and is believed to be the result of a conspiracy of Muslims in the early centuries". More clearly, he added "The Qur'an is a text that has nothing to do directly with the life of the Prophet Muhammad. The Qur'an is nothing but a book written by a group of people. The Qur'an does not appear as a single holy book, but rather as a unique communication process that responds to certain socio-religious phenomena" (Crone, 1987:147). Regarding the history of the Qur'an, Patricia Crone revealed that Makkah is not an International Trade Center, so it has nothing to do with the emergence of Islam and also the place where the Qur'an was revealed (Patricia Crone, 1987:186). It is this

thought that shows Crone's thought that the descent of the Qur'an does not come from the revelation of the Prophet SAW from Allah SWT, but from the literary works of the Arab community.

Among Western scholars, Patricia Crone has a controversial view regarding the place of the Qur'an's descent. Patricia Crone's study of the Qur'an shows that she was influenced by the views of John Wansbrough, who held that the Qur'an, as the primary source of Islam, was not revealed in Mecca and Medina but originated in the region of Iraq or Mesopotamia (Nasution et al., 2022:87). Arguments regarding the Qur'an are based on the belief that the text of the Qur'an is very contemporary and was handed down in a pluralistic society. In addition, he argued that Iraq was more suitable as a place of descent of the Qur'an than Mecca and Medina. Iraq is more suitable than Mecca and Medina. Wansbrough also believes that the Qur'an was compiled during the time of Caliph Abdul Malik ibn Marwan, not the time of Abu Bakr. Of course, this

view of John Wansbrough is very contrary to traditional Muslim beliefs in general about the beginning of the emergence of the Qur'an (Cahaya Khaeroni, 2017:198).

### **Critical account of Patricia Crone's Thought on the chronology of The Descent of the Qur'an in the Meccan period**

Crone and Cook in their book describe the history of the early development of Islam is largely considered definitive and comes from Islamic sources. However, the full validity of these sources for the initial stage has not yet been established. There is no hard evidence of the existence of the Qur'an before the end of the 7th century, and later interpretations did not appear until the middle of the 8th century (Crone and Cook, 1978). This caused doubts among some about the extent of the historical truth of Islam. Islamic sources do not give exact historical facts, but only help to understand Islam in the 8th century. Of these sources, only a few can be used unambiguously. The only option is to seek new views, leaving the sources

that come from the Islamic religion (Rahman, 2015:134).

As a revisionist, Patricia Crone reinvestigates what has been done by reexamining, examining history and concepts related to the chronology of the Qur'an. The approach he uses is included in the skeptical approach (Aisyah Ali 2020), which is not to believe anything that Muslims accept. Patricia Crone skeptically questions Muslim sources. Very few sources can provide "neutral" information to investigate the beginnings of Islam, including limited archaeological data, Numismatic evidence, and even documents related to the history of the Qur'an. According to Patricia Crone (Ikhwan, 2020:205),, written sources, whatever and however the form, written by Muslims cannot describe what happened two centuries earlier which needs reconsideration with source criticism.

The sources Patricia Crone uses in her research are replacing traditional Muslim sources by using sources written by contemporary non-Muslims who are contemporaries of the Prophet Muhammad as more

reliable sources to reconstruct the history of Islam. Literature on the history of Islam appeared centuries after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. This considerable distance in time can lead to distortions in the historical constructions used to explain the emergence of Islam and The Life of the Prophet Muhammad.

### **Implications of Crone's thinking on the chronology of The Descent of the Qur'an in the Meccan period**

Crone's theories have sparked a review of early Islamic history, questioned traditional narratives, and encouraged scholars to consider alternative explanations. Many early accounts of the development of Islam are considered uncertain and unproven through Islamic sources at an early stage (Fatah, 2019). There is no solid evidence for the existence of the Qur'an before the last decades of the 7th century, and the tradition of incorporating such stories into historical context has not been proven before the mid-8th century. Therefore, the validity of this Islamic tradition is still debated (Ahmad

Fadholi, 2014:287). Patricia Crone's argument suggests that the Qur'an did not appear as a fully formed and static text, but developed gradually over time. The Qur'an does not come down in a space and time that is empty of values, but in a society that is full of various cultural and religious values. At that time in the Middle East region there are two major powers that are quite influential: Roman Christian influence along the Red Sea and Persian Zoroastrian centered in Mesopotamia influential in the east of the Arabian Peninsula to the coast of Yemen. Thus, the Arabian Peninsula as the place where the Prophet Muhammad was sent and the basis of his struggle did not receive direct political influence from the two empires (Ghozali Mahbub, 2020:273).

Patricia Crone wrote a history with a different approach. He did not rely on Muslim sources, considering them to be works full of polemics and reflecting historical constructions from the perspective of the Muslim community in the second century of the Hijri. According to Patricia Crone, these writings do not reflect what

happened two centuries earlier. Therefore, he used contemporary non-Muslim sources as more reliable sources to reconstruct the history of Islam. Patricia Crone's research was conducted at a time when traditional views were being questioned in a variety of fields, including religious studies and historiography. This academic situation also influenced his approach in studying the history of the Qur'an. In addition Crone uses source criticism techniques commonly used in historical research. He critically analyzed early Islamic texts, including the Qur'an, hadith literature, and historical records, questioning their authenticity, authorship, and reliability.

One of the greatest impacts of Crone's thought was the critical thinking he introduced to the sources of Early Islamic history. By challenging the reliability of such sources, Crone encouraged historians and scholars to conduct more critical and objective research. In addition, Patricia Crone's thought has prompted historians to review the early history of Islam. It stimulates

more in-depth debate and research on the origins of Islam, the development of this religion, and the social, political, and cultural roles in its formation. This has paved the way for new approaches and a more complex understanding of the early history of Islam.

According to Patricia Crone's analysis of the Qur'an, the Qur'an was shaped by the theories of John Wansbrough, and the main source of the Qur'an's descent was not revealed in Mecca or Medina but rather in Iraq or Mesopotamia. He said, "the argument about the Qur'an is based on the belief that the text of the Qur'an is very contemporary and was revealed in a pluralistic society." Some argue that Iraq is a better location than Mecca and Medina for the revelation of the Qur'an. The Qur'an." He questions Muslim sources with skepticism. The most significant aspect of Crone's thinking is questioning the validity of those sources. Crone urged academics and historians to conduct more impartial and critical investigations and analyses.

Crone's research offers three different approaches to examining the uniqueness of the Qur'anic chronology of Revelation. First, with a critical approach, Crone proposed that it would be more accurate to determine the descent of the Qur'an in Iraq than in Mecca. Secondly, he draws conclusions from non-Muslim sources that ultimately give rise to some ideas that are opposite and negatively correlated with the grouping of Surahs Makkiyah and Madaniyah in the Qur'an. Third, contrary to what is often claimed by traditionalist schools of thought, the civilization in which the Qur'an was revealed was more advanced, intellectual, and sophisticated than primitive civilizations.

Patricia Crone's study of the history of the Qur'an may have quite different results from what Muslims understand. So it is possible that in the future it will give birth to further studies that refute Patricia Crone's thoughts. As clearly conveyed by Nöldeke in Nur, research (2023:4538) uses tafsir and historical histories as the main source of reference. The

historical narrations about major events become a foothold in determining the naming of letters or verses. Although these histories are helpful in the chronology of the Qur'an, they are very few in number and generally relate more to the Madinah period. While the number of historical accounts in the Makkah period is very limited and historically the data is of doubtful validity and in general it is more about historical events that do not provide much important information in reconstructing the chronology of the Qur'an. In addition, there are verses that are considered part of the Makkah period turned down after the hijrah, as well as two verses that are closely related but connected with different events.

Another relevant study analyzing Patricia Crone's thinking is the controversial book early Islam by Mun'im Sirry (Sirry 2014). This book examines Patricia Crone's thoughts on the Qur'an in the formative period, namely related to the descent of the Qur'an as a divine revelation to the Prophet Muhammad and then

codified into mushaf era of Uthman bin Affan. Patricia Crone's thought is controversial because it includes a study of the Model Of John Wansbrough who held that the stabilization of the text of the Qur'an was only realized in the 9th century AD, two centuries after the death of the Prophet. Although John Wansbrough was criticized by other researchers, Wansbrough's ideas inspired modern studies of the Qur'an in the form of literary analysis of the Qur'an text without reference to traditional literature that is considered problematic. The transformation of the Qur'an from scriptio defectiva (fragmented writing) to scriptio plena (complete text) had an impact on the new reading of the Qur'an. Here also arises the controversial view that the Qur'an was not born in Mecca, but in Iraq.

Patricia Crone's approach to the history of the Qur'an has provided a profound difference in the views of Muslims so far. Patricia Crone is more concerned with using contemporary non-Muslim sources as an alternative in the study of Islamic history. This

prompted the birth of Patricia Crone's contradictory argument in terms of the history of the Qur'an. Patricia Crone has her own way of studying Islam by extending and developing ideas that have been put forward by earlier historians, such as John Wansbrough who argued that the Qur'an did not appear in a known form during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad, but the result of a long redaction process thereafter. The birth of Patricia Crone's thought can foster an attitude of openness, tolerance, and respect for diverse viewpoints and interpretations. It can also deepen research on the early history of Islam with a critical approach, and an approach that involves further research into the sources of Islamic history, pre-Islamic literature, and the social and cultural context of the period.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study shows that it turns out that the Qur'an came down not in a space and time that is empty of values, but in a society that is full of various cultural and religious values. The result of the approach used by

Patricia Crone is that first, skeptically, Crone suggests that the chronology of the descent of the Qur'an is more appropriate to be pinned down in Iraq than in Mecca. Secondly, such thoughts are obtained from non-muslim sources that finally describe contradictory thoughts that are inversely proportional to the surah of the Qur'an Makkiyah and Madaniyah. Third, the social situation in which the Qur'an was revealed was also not that of a primitive society, as the Traditionalist version generally describes it, but that of a more advanced, more philosophical and sophisticated society. This research is not perfect, for future research who want to do similar research should make improvements in aspects of objective social conditions. Thus, this study requires refinement and is expected to provide new insights in future research.

## **REFERENCE**

Ahmad Fadholi. 2014. "Studi Kritis terhadap Pemikiran John Wonsbrough tentang Historisitas Al-Qur'an." *Hermeunetik* 8(2):281–304.

Aisyah Ali. 2020. "Perdebatan Historitas Al-Qur'an Perspektif Orientalis Skeptis dan Dialogis-Akademis." *Jurnal IA* 4(2):12–28. doi: [https://www.academia.edu/download/69803222/ulumul\\_al\\_qur\\_an\\_dan\\_sejarah\\_perkembangannya.pdf](https://www.academia.edu/download/69803222/ulumul_al_qur_an_dan_sejarah_perkembangannya.pdf).

Cahaya Khaeroni. 2017. "Sejarah Al-Qur'an (Uraian Analitis, Kronologis, dan Naratif tentang Sejarah Kodifikasi Al-Qur'an)." *HISTORIA: Jurnal Program Studi Pendidikan Sejarah* 5(2):195–209.

Carimokam, Sahaja. 2010. *Muhammad and the People of the Book: Introduction to Environmental Physics*. USA: Xlibris Corporation.

Crone, P., and M. Cook. 1978. "Hagarism. The Making of the Islamic World." *International Journal of Contemporary Educational Research* 11(4):434–36. doi: 10.5771/0506-7286-1978-4-434.

Fatah, Abdul. 2019. "Analisis Semiotika Roland Barthes tentang Ashabul Fiil." *Al-Tadabbur: Jurnal Kajian Sosial, Peradaban dan Agama* 5(2):133–48.

Ghozali Mahbub. 2020. "Asbab Al-Nuzul as Historical Criticism on The Emergence of Revisionist Islam." *Buletin Al-Turas* 10(2):202–38.

Ikhwan, Munirul. 2020. "Drama Ilahi: Sebuah Upaya dalam Membaca Kronologi Wahyu Al-Qur'an." *Mutawatir: Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadith* 10(2):202–38.

Ismail, Faisal. 1999. "Perdagangan Mekkah dan Kernunculan Islam (Mendiskusikan Tesis Montgomery Watt dan Patricia Crone)." *Al-Jami'ah* 12(64).

Muhammad Rafii. 2015. "Memahami Konsep Islam Revisionis Mun'im Sirry." *Nizham Journal of Islamic Studies* 10(1):1–12.

Sirry, Mun'im. 2014. *Kontroversi Islam Awal antara Madzhab Tradisionalis dan Revisionis*. Bandung: Mizan Pustaka.

Nasution, Gusniarti, Jannati Nabila, Violeta Inayah Pama, and Eniwiati Khadir. 2022. "Situasi Sosial Keagamaan Masyarakat Arab Pra Islam." *Tsaqifa Nusantara: Jurnal Pembelajaran dan Isu-Isu Sosial* 1(1):85–98.

Nur, Zunaidi. 2023. "Kronologi Al-Qur'an Periode Makkah (Analisis Internal Teks Theodor Nöldeke

(1836-1930) dalam Penyusunan Kronologi Al- Qur'an Periode Makkah)." *Ulil Arbab* 1(12):4536-45.

Patricia Crone. 1987. *Meccan Trade and Rise of Islam*. USA: Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Rafii, Muhammad. 2022. "Memahami Konsep Islam Revisionis Mun'Im Sirry." *Nizham Journal of Islamic Studies* 10(1):1. doi: 10.32332/nizham.v10i1.5089.

Rahman, Yusuf. 2015. "Pendekatan Tradisionalis dan Revisionis dalam Kajian Sejarah Pembentukan Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir pada Masa Islam Awal." *Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 4(1):129-45. doi: 10.15408/quhas.v4i1.2286.

Serjeant, R. .. 1990. "Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam: Misconceptions and Flawed Polemics Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam by Patricia Crone." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 110(3):472486-.