



Forms and Functions of Qur'anic Intertextuality in Sūrat al-Mā'idah: A Michel Cuypers Perspective

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Abstract

This study examines Michel Cuypers' interpretation of intertextuality in Sūrat al-Mā'idah through the perspective of Semitic rhetoric. The research is motivated by the ongoing debate concerning the relationship between the Qur'an and previous scriptures, which is often viewed merely as textual borrowing rather than a rhetorical strategy for constructing meaning. This study aims to identify the forms of intertextuality employed by Cuypers and to explain their rhetorical functions within the compositional structure of Sūrat al-Mā'idah. Employing qualitative library research, the study uses a descriptive-analytical approach based on Semitic rhetorical analysis and intertextuality theory. The findings reveal that intertextuality in Sūrat al-Mā'idah encompasses references to the Torah, the Gospels, the Targum, the Midrash, and the Mishnah. These intertextual relations operate through three principal functions: confirmative, corrective, and reconstructive. Rather than reproducing earlier narratives, the Qur'an reorganizes them within a coherent rhetorical structure to reinforce its theological worldview. The novelty of this study lies in conceptualizing the rhetorical functions of intertextuality, demonstrating that intertextual relations contribute not only to textual coherence but also to the production of meaning within Qur'anic discourse. The findings contribute to the development of Arabic linguistic and literary studies, particularly in Semitic rhetoric and Qur'anic stylistics.

Keywords: *Intertextual Functions; Michel Cuypers; Qur'anic Intertextuality; Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA); Sūrat al-Mā'idah.*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji intertekstualitas Surah al-Mā'idah dalam perspektif Michel Cuypers melalui pendekatan retorika Semitik. Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh perdebatan mengenai hubungan Al-Qur'an dengan kitab-kitab suci terdahulu yang sering dipahami hanya sebagai bentuk peminjaman teks, padahal hubungan tersebut dapat dipandang sebagai strategi retorik pembentukan makna. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengidentifikasi bentuk-bentuk intertekstualitas dalam Surah al-Mā'idah menurut Michel Cuypers serta menjelaskan fungsi retorikanya dalam struktur komposisi surah. Penelitian menggunakan metode kepustakaan dengan pendekatan deskriptif-analitis berdasarkan teori intertekstualitas dan *semitic rhetorical analysis (SRA)*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa intertekstualitas dalam Surah al-Mā'idah mencakup hubungan dengan Taurat, Injil, Targum, Midras, dan Mishnah. Hubungan tersebut bekerja melalui tiga fungsi utama, yaitu fungsi konfirmatif, korektif, dan rekonstruktif. Al-Qur'an tidak mereproduksi narasi-narasi sebelumnya, tetapi menyusunnya kembali dalam struktur retorik yang utuh untuk menegaskan pesan tauhid. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada perumusan fungsi-fungsi retorik



intertekstualitas sebagai mekanisme pembentukan makna, sehingga intertekstualitas dipahami tidak hanya sebagai hubungan antarteks, tetapi juga sebagai strategi retorik dalam membangun kesatuan makna Surah al-Mā'idah. Temuan ini diharapkan memperkaya kajian bahasa dan sastra Arab, khususnya pada bidang retorika Semitik dan stilistika Al-Qur'an.

Kata kunci: Fungsi Intertekstualitas; Intertekstualitas Al-Qur'an; Michel Cuypers; Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA); Surah al-Mā'idah.

A. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between the Qur'an and the Jewish-Christian tradition has become one of the central issues in contemporary Qur'anic studies. The debate concerns not only the similarities in narratives, religious concepts, and moral teachings shared by the Qur'an and the Bible but also the ways in which these textual relationships should be understood within the frameworks of revelation, history, and meaning-making. Recent scholarship has increasingly argued that these relationships should not be understood merely as evidence of textual borrowing but rather as expressions of the Qur'an's creative engagement with earlier scriptural traditions (Reynolds, 2010).

Various approaches have been developed to explain this phenomenon. Classical Orientalist scholars generally adopted a historical-philological approach by tracing the textual sources presumed to underlie Qur'anic passages. This approach was systematically developed through the works of Theodor Noldeke, who regarded the Qur'an as a historical document that should be understood according to the chronology of revelation and the development of its textual composition (Noldeke, 2004). It subsequently influenced many modern Qur'anic studies that interpreted the relationship between the Qur'an and the Biblical tradition primarily as a matter of textual transmission.

In response to these limitations, some scholars have shifted their attention toward the internal structure of the Qur'an. Angelika Neuwirth, Pierre Crapon de Caprona, and Michel Cuypers argue that Qur'anic surahs possess systematic compositional patterns that can be analyzed scientifically. Within this framework, Cuypers developed the Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA), which assumes that Semitic texts are constructed through rhetorical patterns such as parallelism, symmetry, and ring composition.

This approach emerged as a critique of earlier Western scholarship that interpreted the structure of the Qur'an through the lens of Greek rhetoric, whereas the linguistic character of the Qur'an is more appropriately understood through the principles of Semitic rhetoric (Cuypers, 2011, 2018). Cuypers' approach also resonates with the classical Arabic linguistic tradition, particularly al-Jurjānī's concept of *naẓm* and al-Farāhī's theory of *niẓām al-Qur'ān*. Although these theories originate from different epistemological frameworks, both emphasize that meaning emerges from the structural relationships among textual units rather than from isolated lexical elements (al-Farāhī, 1968; al-Jurjānī, 1992).

In modern literary theory, the concept of intertextuality was first introduced by Julia Kristeva, who argued that every text is a mosaic of quotations and a transformation of preceding texts (Kristeva, 1997). Michel Cuypers integrates the concept of intertextuality with SRA, arguing that textual relationships should be understood not merely as evidence of common sources but as integral components of the rhetorical organization through which the Qur'an constructs coherent meaning (Boisliveau, 2013; Cuypers, 2018).

Although SRA primarily examines the internal context of Qur'anic verses and surahs, Cuypers argues that such analysis should be complemented by an intertextual perspective. Accordingly, the Qur'an is read not only through its internal rhetorical structure but also through its dialogue with earlier scriptural traditions. This reflects the broader understanding of intertextuality in modern literary theory, in which a text interacts with previous texts while producing new meanings within its own literary and theological context ('Azzām, 1996).

The Qur'an addresses communities already familiar with Biblical traditions, and its dialogue with the People of the Book reflects a shared religious environment in Late Antiquity rather than direct textual dependence (Griffith, 2013). In his analysis of Sūrat al-Mā'idah, Cuypers (2016) demonstrates how its rhetorical composition reveals a coherent organization while engaging with earlier Jewish and Christian traditions. Rather than treating these relationships simply as evidence of textual dependence, his analysis points to a process in which earlier traditions are reinterpreted within the Qur'anic

theological framework to generate new meaning configurations (Boisliveau, 2009; Sinai, 2017).

Boisliveau (2013) argues that Cuypers' principal contribution lies in his successful integration of SRA and intertextual analysis in interpreting the Qur'an's structure (Boisliveau, 2013). Likewise, Ṭāhirī (2021) maintains that this approach effectively explains the relationships among textual units, allowing the surah to be understood as an integrated discourse (Ṭāhirī, 2023). Within the Indonesian context, Asnawi and Idri (2020) argue that SRA can be incorporated into the Islamic exegetical tradition without disregarding classical interpretive methodologies (Asnawi & Idri, 2020). Similarly, (Author, 2022) highlights the broader contribution of SRA to Qur'anic studies by emphasizing its potential to strengthen interreligious understanding and religious tolerance through a more contextual reading of the Qur'an.

Conversely, Minzu (2018) criticizes the approach for insufficiently accommodating the disciplines of 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān, particularly *asbāb al-nuzūl* and *naskh* (Minzū, 2018). Methodological reservations are also expressed by Sinai (2017), who contends that some of Cuypers' structural reconstructions require more rigorous philological verification (Sinai, 2017). More recently, (Author, 2026) argues that Muslim scholars' responses to SRA have evolved not through absolute acceptance or rejection but through a process of critical adaptation that preserves the epistemological foundations of Islamic Qur'anic interpretation.

Despite these contributions, Cuypers' analysis of Sūrat al-Mā'idah has primarily demonstrated the rhetorical coherence of the surah and its engagement with earlier scriptural traditions (Cuypers, 2016), while subsequent studies have largely examined its structural and intertextual dimensions (Boisliveau, 2009; al-Mujawwad, 2020). Consequently, scholarly attention has remained centered on the forms and sources of intertextuality rather than on explaining how intertextuality functions as a mechanism for constructing meaning and theological messages within the Qur'an. Accordingly, the functional dimension of intertextuality remains relatively underexplored, particularly in Michel Cuypers' reading of Sūrat al-Mā'idah.

Building upon this research gap, the present study aims to analyze the forms of intertextuality between the Qur'an and the Bible in Sūrat al-Mā'idah based on Michel Cuypers' interpretation while also explaining how these intertextual relationships function in constructing the surah's theological message. Based on an analysis of Sūrat al-Mā'idah, this study proposes a threefold classification of intertextual functions: confirmatory, corrective, and reconstructive. This classification extends the application of SRA beyond its conventional role in explaining structural coherence, positioning it instead as an analytical framework for understanding how the Qur'an constructs meaning and theological discourse.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative library research design. Library research was selected because all research data were derived from written sources concerning the intertextual relationship between the Qur'an and the Bible from the perspective of Michel Cuypers. A qualitative approach was adopted because the study aims to explore the forms, functions, and meaning-making processes of intertextuality in Sūrat al-Mā'idah through textual analysis rather than quantitatively examining causal relationships among variables quantitatively (Creswell, 2014; Moleong, 2018).

The study applied a descriptive-analytical method using semitic rhetorical analysis (SRA), developed by Michel Cuypers, as its primary analytical framework. This approach was chosen because it reveals the rhetorical organization of the Qur'an through patterns of parallelism, symmetry, and ring composition, enabling relationships among textual units to be understood as an integrated structure of meaning (Boisliveau, 2013; Cuypers, 2011, 2018).

SRA was considered particularly appropriate for Sūrat al-Mā'idah because this study examines intertextuality not merely as a reference to earlier traditions but as a textual relationship embedded within the surah's rhetorical organization. Where contextualist approaches primarily emphasize the historical and socio-cultural circumstances surrounding the Qur'anic text, and structuralist approaches generally focus on the internal relations among textual elements, SRA makes it possible to connect the internal rhetorical structure of the surah with its intertextual relationships. This is

particularly relevant to Sūrat al-Mā'idah, in which passages concerning the Children of Israel, the Torah, the Gospel, and the narratives of Cain and Abel are distributed across broader rhetorical units whose relationships contribute to the construction of meaning.

In this study, SRA was employed not only to explain the structural coherence of Sūrat al-Mā'idah, but also to examine how intertextuality functions in constructing the surah's theological message. Thus, SRA serves as a methodological bridge between structural analysis and intertextual interpretation, allowing the study to investigate how references to earlier traditions are rhetorically positioned and transformed within the Qur'anic discourse. The selection of this approach was further supported by recent Qur'anic scholarship demonstrating its compatibility with the Islamic exegetical tradition (Asnawi & Idri, 2020).

The analysis is also informed by al-Jurjānī's concept of *naẓm*, which understands meaning as emerging from the relationships among linguistic elements within a textual structure (al-Jurjānī, 1992). This concept complements SRA by providing a classical Arabic linguistic basis for examining how textual arrangement contributes to meaning construction. The research data consisted of both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources comprised Michel Cuypers' major works on Sūrat al-Mā'idah, particularly *Fī Naẓm Sūrah al-Mā'idah*. Secondary sources included books, journal articles, conference proceedings, and previous studies addressing SRA, intertextuality, Arabic linguistics, and contemporary Qur'anic studies.

Data were collected through document analysis, which involved reviewing, identifying, selecting, and classifying documents relevant to the research objectives (Bowen, 2009; Zed, 2014). The collected data were subsequently organized into three analytical categories: (1) the forms of intertextuality between the Qur'an and the Jewish-Christian tradition in Sūrat al-Mā'idah; (2) the rhetorical structures underlying these intertextual relationships as explained through SRA; and (3) the functions of intertextuality in constructing the theological message of the surah.

Data analysis was conducted in four stages. First, the textual units of Sūrat al-Mā'idah analyzed by Michel Cuypers were identified based on the principles of Semitic rhetoric. Second, the forms of intertextuality were described through comparison with

Biblical traditions. Third, the relationship between rhetorical structure and intertextualities was analyzed to explain the process of meaning construction. Finally, the functions of intertextuality were interpreted, resulting in a threefold classification of confirmatory, corrective, and reconstructive functions. The analysis was conducted interpretively by considering the linguistic context, rhetorical organization, and intertextual relationships that collectively shape the thematic unity of Sūrat al-Mā'idah (Cuypers, 2018).

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed prolonged engagement with the literature and cross-checking among Michel Cuypers' works and a wide range of supporting studies on Semitic rhetoric, intertextuality, and contemporary Qur'anic scholarship. This procedure was intended to maintain the consistency of interpretation and strengthen the validity of the arguments developed throughout the study (Bowen, 2009; Moleong, 2018).

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Intertextuality in Michel Cuypers' Reading of Sūrat al-Mā'idah

The relationship between the Qur'an and the Bible has become one of the most dynamic topics in contemporary Qur'anic studies. Unlike classical Orientalist approaches, which primarily emphasize source criticism and the historical influence of the Bible on the Qur'an, Michel Cuypers offers a different perspective through Semitic Rhetoric. According to Cuypers, the relationship between the Qur'an and the Bible should not be understood as one of textual dependence but rather as a process of re-reading earlier scriptural traditions (Cuypers, 2016).

Semitic rhetoric constitutes the principal analytical tool in Cuypers' intertextual reading. The approach is based on the assumption that Semitic texts are organized through rhetorical patterns such as parallelism, symmetry, and ring composition. Through his analyses of Sūrat al-Fātiḥah, Sūrat Yūsuf, and particularly Sūrat al-Mā'idah, Cuypers demonstrates that the significance of intertextuality can only be fully understood when interpreted within the rhetorical composition of the entire surah (al-Mujawwad, 2020; Cuypers, 2003, 2016, 2020).

This approach is most comprehensively applied in Cuypers' analysis of Sūrat al-Mā'idah. He argues that the surah maintains particularly strong intertextual connections with the Biblical tradition, especially the Book of Deuteronomy. Rather than reproducing earlier scriptural materials, however, the Qur'an re-reads these traditions by reorganizing narratives, legal prescriptions, and religious teachings within its own revelatory framework. Sūrat al-Mā'idah therefore represents a paradigmatic example of how the Qur'an simultaneously preserves continuity with earlier scriptures while reformulating them into a renewed theological discourse.

This interpretation is reinforced by Boisliveau (2013), who identifies Cuypers' principal contribution as his successful integration of SRA and intertextual analysis into a unified approach to Qur'anic interpretation (Boisliveau, 2013; Gözeler, 2010). Likewise, al-Mujawwad (2020) argues that Semitic rhetoric reveals the structural coherence of Sūrat al-Mā'idah more effectively than approaches limited to historical analysis (al-Mujawwad, 2020). Nevertheless, both studies remain primarily concerned with identifying textual relationships and demonstrating the structural organization of the surah. This study extends this discussion by employing the same analytical framework to explain the functions of intertextuality as a mechanism of meaning-making within Sūrat al-Mā'idah.

2. Forms of Intertextuality between the Qur'an and the Bible in Sūrat al-Mā'idah

a. Narrative Intertextuality: The Story of Cain and Abel (Q. 5:27–31)

One of the most prominent forms of intertextuality in Sūrat al-Mā'idah appears in the story of Cain and Abel (Q. 5:27–31). This narrative bears a close relationship to the account of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4:1–16. However, Michel Cuypers argues that the Qur'an does not merely repeat the Biblical narrative; rather, it presents it through a process of re-reading that produces a distinct rhetorical structure and theological orientation (Cuypers, 2016; Author, 2025).

This intertextual relationship is evident in several narrative elements. The dialogue between Adam's two sons in the Qur'an is absent from the Book of Genesis but resembles the Targumic tradition, which records debates concerning resurrection, reward, and punishment. Nevertheless, the Qur'an does not adopt this tradition in its

entirety. Instead, the dialogue is reformulated to emphasize piety (*taqwā*), submission to God, and the rejection of violence. Likewise, the episode of the raven teaching Cain how to bury his brother shares similarities with the Midrashic tradition but is incorporated into a different narrative framework that reinforces the Qur'an's moral message (Cuypers, 2016).

These findings indicate that the story of Cain and Abel engages multiple Biblical and Jewish traditions, particularly the Genesis narrative and its subsequent interpretive traditions. Accordingly, this intertextuality reflects a process of re-reading earlier scriptural traditions rather than textual dependence.

b. Legislative Intertextuality: Legal Prescription for the Protection of Human Life (QoL)

A legislative form of intertextuality in Sūrat al-Mā'idah is found in Q. 5:32, which establishes the prohibition against unlawfully taking human life. According to Michel Cuypers, this verse is closely related to the Jewish legal tradition, particularly Exodus 21:23–25 and the Mishnah. This relationship reflects a process of re-reading earlier legal traditions rather than a reproduction of Biblical texts (Cuypers, 2016).

One indicator of this intertextual relationship is the use of the verb *katabnā* (*katabnā*, "We have prescribed"), which in the Qur'an generally introduces divine legal ordinances. Cuypers argues that this formulation resembles the legislative language found in Biblical legal traditions. Nevertheless, the statement equating the killing of a single person with the killing of all humanity bears a closer resemblance to the Mishnah than to the Book of Exodus, indicating a stronger connection with the Jewish oral legal tradition (Cuypers, 2016).

This observation is consistent with Holger Zellentin's argument that Qur'anic legal discourse should be understood within the broader context of Late Antique Jewish legal culture rather than as a simple borrowing from the Hebrew Bible. According to Zellentin (2013), the Qur'an engages with legal traditions that circulated through both written and oral channels, allowing earlier legal concepts to be reformulated within its own revelatory and theological framework (Zellentin, 2013).

Unlike the explicit references to the Torah in Q. 7:145 or the Psalms (Zabūr) in Q. 21:105, Q. 5:32 merely states that this legal prescription was given to the Children of Israel without identifying a specific textual source. This suggests that while the Qur'an acknowledges the existence of earlier legal traditions, it recontextualizes them within its own revelatory framework, emphasizing their moral substance rather than the authority of their original textual sources.

Accordingly, the legislative intertextuality of Q. 5:32 transforms a legal prescription originally addressed to the Children of Israel into a universal ethical principle affirming the sanctity of human life. Its placement immediately after the narrative of Cain and Abel also establishes a rhetorical continuity between narrative and legislation within the structure of Sūrat al-Mā'idah.

c. Christological Intertextuality: The Meaning of *Rūḥ al-Qudus* in Q. 5:110

A theological form of intertextuality in Sūrat al-Mā'idah is found in Q. 5:110, particularly in the phrase *ayyadtuka bi-Rūḥ al-Qudus* ("I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit"). According to Michel Cuypers, this verse is closely related to the Christian tradition concerning the Holy Spirit. However, this relationship operates through a process of re-reading that generates a new interpretation within the Qur'anic framework of *tawḥīd* (Cuypers, 2016).

In the Islamic exegetical tradition, *Rūḥ al-Qudus* is generally understood as the angel Gabriel, who is entrusted with conveying divine revelation and strengthening God's messengers. In contrast, within the Christian tradition, particularly in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is understood as the third person with the Trinity. This theological distinction forms the starting point of Cuypers' intertextual analysis of the relationship between the Qur'an and the Christian tradition (Cuypers, 2016).

Drawing comparisons with several New Testament passages, including Matthew 4:1, Luke 4:18, and the Gospel of John, Cuypers argues that the Qur'an deliberately retains a term familiar to the People of the Book while assigning it a different theological significance. In the Qur'an, *Rūḥ al-Qudus* denotes God's divine support and empowerment granted to Jesus in carrying out his prophetic mission, rather than a divine person as understood in Trinitarian doctrine (Cuypers, 2016).

This semantic reformulation may also be understood from the perspective of Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic theory. According to Izutsu (2002), the meaning of a Qur'anic term is determined not by its historical origin but by its position within the Qur'an's conceptual network (*semantic field*). Consequently, although the expression *Rūḥ al-Qudus* shares lexical similarities with the Christian concept of the Holy Spirit, its meaning is reconstructed within the Qur'anic worldview, where it signifies divine support granted by God rather than a person of the Trinity (Izutsu, 2002).

Accordingly, the theological intertextuality of Q. 5:110 demonstrates how the Qur'an appropriates terminology shared with the Christian tradition while transforming its meaning in accordance with the principle of *tawḥīd*. Together with the narrative and legislative forms discussed above, this finding indicates that Sūrat al-Mā'idah engages Jewish and Christian traditions through a process of re-reading, integrating elements of earlier scriptural traditions into the Qur'an's rhetorical structure and theological framework.

Functions of Intertextuality in Sūrat al-Mā'idah from Michel Cuypers' Perspective

The preceding discussion demonstrates that intertextuality in Sūrat al-Mā'idah not only reveals the Qur'an's relationship with Jewish and Christian traditions but also illustrates a process of re-reading through which these traditions are reconfigured within the Qur'an's rhetorical and theological framework. Accordingly, the analysis extends beyond identifying forms of intertextuality to explaining their functions. Based on the findings of this study, the functions of intertextuality in Sūrat al-Mā'idah can be classified into three categories: confirmatory, corrective, and reconstructive. Together, these functions explain the mechanism of meaning-making in Michel Cuypers' intertextual reading.

Table 1. Functional Classification of Intertextuality in Sūrat al-Mā'idah

No.	Function	Characteristics	Representative Verses	Meaning Construction
1.	Confirmatory	Affirms universal values preserved from previous revelations	Q. 5:32	Reinforces the continuity of prophetic messages and moral teachings
2.	Corrective	Reorients earlier theological concepts according to tawḥīd	Q. 5:110	Corrects previous theological understandings while retaining familiar terminology.
3.	Reconstructive	Reorganizes narrative, legal, and theological elements into a new rhetorical structure.	Q. 5:27–32	Produces new theological meaning through Qur'anic rhetorical organization

Although Q. 5:32 represents the confirmatory function through its affirmation of the sanctity of human life, its position within the sequence of Q. 5:27–32 also contributes to the reconstructive function by linking narrative and legislation within the Qur'an's rhetorical structure.

a. Confirmatory Function

This study finds that one of the primary functions of intertextuality in Sūrat al-Mā'idah is the confirmatory function, namely, the reaffirmation of universal values that had already been conveyed through earlier revelations. In this function, the Qur'an does not reproduce earlier narratives or legal rulings verbatim; rather, it preserves those teachings whose substance remains consistent with the principle of tawḥīd. Therefore, intertextuality serves to affirm the continuity of the prophetic message rather than to demonstrate textual dependence on previous scriptures (Cuypers, 2016; Rahman, 1980).

The confirmatory function is likewise clear in Q. 5:32, which emphasizes the sanctity of human life. Cuypers argues that the verse is intertextually related to the Mishnah and Jewish legal tradition, yet the Qur'an transforms these legal precedents into a universal ethical principle. Its placement immediately after the story of Cain and Abel establishes a rhetorical continuity between narrative and legislation, thereby reinforcing the moral foundation for the protection of human life (al-Mujawwad, 2020; Cuypers, 2016).

From Cuypers' perspective, the rhetorical organization of the sūrah provides the framework in which this continuity is constructed, particularly through the connection between the Cain and Abel narrative and the subsequent ethical prescription (Cuypers, 2016; al-Mujawwad, 2020).

b. Corrective Function

In addition to confirming universal values, intertextuality in Sūrah al-Mā'idah serves a corrective function, namely, it rectifies concepts that developed within earlier religious traditions in accordance with the Qur'anic principle of *tawḥīd*. In this function, the Qur'an retains terms, figures, and traditions already familiar to the People of the Book but reorients their meanings within a different theological framework. Thus, intertextuality does not merely reveal textual relationships but also functions as a mechanism of theological correction (Cuypers, 2016).

This corrective function is evident in Qur'an 5:110, particularly in the phrase *ayyadtuka bi-Rūḥ al-Qudus* ("I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit"). According to Cuypers, the term *Rūḥ al-Qudus* is intertextually related to the Christian concept of the Holy Spirit, yet the Qur'an assigns it a different theological meaning. Whereas Christian doctrine understands the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity, the Qur'an presents *Rūḥ al-Qudus* as God's divine support for Jesus, commonly identified in Islamic exegesis as the Angel Gabriel. Accordingly, the Qur'an preserves the familiar terminology while redirecting its theological orientation to remain consistent with the doctrine of *tawḥīd* (Cuypers, 2016).

Classical Muslim exegesis provides an additional context for this reconstructive process. Al-Ṭabarī interprets *Rūḥ al-Qudus* as Gabriel and emphasizes God's support

for Jesus, while al-Rāzī likewise relates the expression to divine assistance. Cuypers' reading complements these interpretations by highlighting how the expression is repositioned within the Qur'anic rhetorical framework, showing that the Qur'an engages familiar theological terminology while reconstructing its meaning within *tawḥīd*.

Through comparison with several Gospel passages, including Matthew 4:1, Luke 4:18, and the Gospel of John, Cuypers demonstrates that this intertextual relationship does not produce identical meanings. Rather, the Qur'an employs the same terminology to construct a distinct theological identity. The corrective function therefore lies in the semantic reorientation of familiar terminology: *Rūḥ al-Qudus* is retained as a recognizable expression but situated within the Qur'an's monotheistic framework. Its placement among God's blessings upon Jesus further supports this theological reorientation (Cuypers, 2016).

This finding extends the work of Boisliveau (Boisliveau, 2009), who argues that Michel Cuypers' intertextual approach explains the dialogue of the Qur'an with Jewish and Christian traditions more systematically than historical approaches. This study further demonstrates that this dialogue simultaneously performs a corrective function by reorienting familiar theological concepts within the framework of *tawḥīd*. Consequently, intertextuality in Sūrah al-Mā'idah is not merely dialogical but also functions as a mechanism of theological correction.

c. Reconstructive Function

In addition to its confirmatory and corrective functions, this study finds that intertextuality in Sūrat al-Mā'idah also serves a reconstructive function, namely, reorganizing elements drawn from earlier religious traditions into the Qur'an's rhetorical structure to produce a new construction of meaning. In this function, the Qur'an not only preserves values that remain relevant or corrects concepts considered inconsistent with *tawḥīd*, but also integrates narrative, legal, and theological elements into a coherent conceptual framework consistent with the Islamic worldview (Cuypers, 2016).

This reconstructive function is most clearly illustrated in the story of Cain and Abel in Q.S. al-Mā'idah [5]:27–31. Cuypers demonstrates that this narrative is closely related to Genesis, the Targum, the Midrash, and even certain passages of the Gospels. However, these elements are not transferred into the Qur'an unchanged. The dialogue between Adam's two sons, Abel's attitude, Cain's remorse, and the episode of the raven are reorganized into a unified narrative that directs readers toward themes of piety, moral responsibility, and the prohibition of spreading corruption on earth. Thus, intertextuality not only reveals textual relationships but also demonstrates the selection, development, and reorganization of earlier traditions, resulting in a new construction of meaning (Cuypers, 2016).

This reconstructive process continues in the relationship between the story of Cain and Abel and Q.S. al-Mā'idah [5]:32 concerning the sanctity of human life. After presenting the narrative of the first murder in human history, the Qur'an immediately introduces a legal injunction as the ethical consequence of that event. According to Cuypers, this arrangement reflects a characteristic feature of Semitic rhetoric, in which meaning is generated through the relationship between textual units, allowing narrative and legislation to function together as a unified argument concerning the sanctity of human life (al-Mujawwad, 2020; Cuypers, 2016).

From the perspective of Arabic linguistics, this process corresponds to al-Jurjānī's concept of *naẓm*. According to al-Jurjānī, meaning arises not from isolated words but from the relationships among textual elements within an integrated structure (al-Jurjānī, 1992). This principle is evident in the organization of Sūrat al-Mā'idah, where narrative, legal injunctions, and theological discourse are arranged cohesively so that each section explains and reinforces the others.

This view is also consistent with Amin al-Khūlī's literary approach to the Qur'an, which emphasizes the importance of structural unity and linguistic context in meaning-making (al-Khūlī, 1996). Consequently, the process of re-reading described by Cuypers operates through the Qur'an's engagement with earlier scriptures and the internal organization of the sūrah itself.

Although SRA does not fully incorporate classical exegetical tools such as *asbāb al-nuzūl* and *naskh*, its reconstructive function can complement them at the level of textual organization. While *asbāb al-nuzūl* contextualizes revelation historically and *naskh* addresses changes in legal or theological rulings, SRA examines how inherited elements are reorganized within the rhetorical structure of the sūrah. Thus, Cuypers' reconstructive reading provides a complementary textual dimension without replacing the classical exegetical framework (Asnawi et al., 2022; Asnawi et al., 2023; Ulumudin et al., 2026).

Based on this analysis, the reconstructive function demonstrates that the Qur'an not only affirms and corrects Jewish and Christian traditions but also reorganizes them into a new configuration of meaning. This finding extends Minzu's (2018) argument regarding the compatibility of the SRA with the Islamic exegetical tradition. The present study shows that the rhetorical organization of Sūrat al-Mā'idah not only establishes structural coherence but also functions as a mechanism of meaning-making through the integration of narrative, legislative, and theological elements (Minzū, 2018).

Overall, the findings indicate that intertextuality in Sūrat al-Mā'idah operates as a process of re-reading that generates new configurations of meaning through the Qur'an's rhetorical organization, rather than as mere reproduction or textual dependence. In line with Sinai (2017), these relationships should therefore be understood beyond the question of textual borrowing alone.

Based on the analysis of both the forms and functions of intertextuality, this study proposes a threefold classification of intertextual functions: confirmatory, corrective, and reconstructive (Sinai, 2017). Based on the analysis of both the forms and functions of intertextuality, this study proposes a threefold classification of intertextual functions: confirmatory, corrective, and reconstructive. This classification constitutes the study's principal contribution by extending Michel Cuypers' approach beyond identifying textual relationships toward a broader analytical framework for explaining the mechanisms of meaning construction in the Qur'an.

D. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that, in Michel Cuypers' reading, intertextuality in Sūrat al-Mā'idah should not be understood as a relationship of textual dependence between the Qur'an and earlier scriptures. Rather, it functions as a rhetorical strategy through which Jewish-Christian traditions are integrated into the compositional structure of the sūrah. Through SRA, references to the Torah, Gospels, Targum, Midrash, and Mishnah form an interconnected network of meaning within the Qur'anic discourse.

The study identifies three principal functions of intertextuality. The confirmatory function reaffirms universal values and the continuity of prophetic teachings found in previous revelations. The corrective function reorients theological concepts, particularly those concerning divinity, prophethood, and Rūḥ al-Qudus, according to the principle of *tawḥīd*. The reconstructive function reorganizes inherited narrative, legal, and theological elements within the Qur'an's rhetorical framework, producing a coherent message consistent with its worldview. Together, these functions demonstrate that intertextuality operates beyond narrative similarity as a mechanism for shaping meaning within the overall composition of the sūrah.

These findings extend Qur'anic intertextuality studies by shifting attention from identifying textual sources toward examining how rhetorical organization contributes to meaning construction. Therefore, this study contributes to research on Semitic rhetoric, Qur'anic stylistics, and the relationship between linguistic structure and meanings. Beyond its textual significance, this approach has implications for contemporary interfaith dialogue and Qur'anic hermeneutics in higher education by encouraging critical and dialogical engagement with Jewish-Christian traditions while maintaining the Qur'an's theological framework.

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