

Revealing I'jāz al-Qur'an: Analysis of the Strength of Evidence in the Makiyah Polemic Verses

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Abstract: Classical scholarship has predominantly located the *i'jāz al-Qur'an* (the inimitability of the Qur'an) in its linguistic excellence, scientific allusions, and foreknowledge of the unseen. Such approaches, however, have paid limited attention to the Qur'an's polemical discourse as a possible locus of *i'jāz*. This article proposes an alternative perspective by examining the inimitability of the Qur'an through the argumentative and moral force embedded in its polemical verses. It addresses three questions: why *i'jāz* appears within Qur'anic polemics, how these verses affected the Meccan audience, and in what ways the Qur'an's argumentative structure functioned as a form of *i'jāz* in the socio-historical context of Mecca. This study employs qualitative textual analysis based on primary sources consisting of Meccan surahs and selected *sīrah* literature, complemented by secondary scholarship from both Muslim and Orientalist traditions. The analysis is conducted through a contemporary interpretive framework integrating Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī's theory of Arab reason and Abu Hilal al-'Askarī's conception of *i'jāz*. The study argues that the inimitability of the Qur'an cannot be reduced solely to aesthetic or epistemic dimensions but also resides in its capacity to construct compelling and irreducible arguments against the opponents of prophethood while simultaneously generating new forms of communal solidarity. The findings indicate that the Qur'an emerged within a context of socio-economic inequality and exercised transformative power by challenging established authority through a moral discourse grounded in values that were already recognized within the religious consciousness of Meccan society. This article contributes to contemporary Qur'anic studies by advancing a moral-argumentative model of *i'jāz*, demonstrating that the Qur'an's polemical discourse constitutes a distinct mode of Qur'anic inimitability.

Keywords: *I'jāz*, Controversial Verses, New Religions, Prophethood.

Abstract: Sarjana klasik mengungkapkan bahwa *i'jāz al-Qur'an* terletak pada keindahan bahasanya, isyarat ilmiah, dan berita gaib. Namun al-Qur'an sendiri banyak mencirikan gaya polemik selain keindahan bahasa. Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk memberi perspektif baru terkait *i'jāz al-Qur'an* yang selama ini hanya berkutat pada aspek bahasa dan isyarat ilmiah. Adapun tulisan ini menjawab tiga pertanyaan: pertama, mengapa *i'jāz al-Qur'an* ada dalam ayat polemik? Kedua, bagaimana ayat polemik itu berpengaruh pada orang Makkah? ketiga, bagaimana kekuatan argumentatif Al-Qur'an berfungsi sebagai *i'jāz* dalam konteks Makkah. Data dalam kajian ini diambil dari sumber primer surah makkiyah dalam al-Qur'an dan beberapa kitab sirah ditambah dengan sumber sekunder dari penulis Muslim dan Orientalis. Data selanjutnya akan dianalisis dengan pendekatan kontemporer memanfaatkan teori Muḥammad Abid al-Jabiri dan konsep *i'jāz* Abu Hilal al-'Askari. Argumen penelitian ini adalah *i'jāz* terletak pada bukti argumentatif yang tak terbantahkan yang diarahkan terhadap lawan-lawan kenabian, yang sekaligus berupaya membangun kembali solidaritas komunal

dalam kerangka tatanan keagamaan baru. Hasil penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa al-Qur'an hadir dalam kondisi sosial ekonomi yang timpang yang mana kemunculannya punya kekuatan daya guncang penguasa yang ada karena membawa pesan moral dari Tuhan yang hakikinya mereka yakini. Kontribusi teoritis penelitian ini adalah konsep *i'jāz* al-Qur'an yang terkandung dalam ayat polemik terletak pada kekuatan moralnya.

Kata Kunci: *I'jāz*, Ayat Polemik, Agama Baru, Kenabian.



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Introduction

The classical scholarly tradition often associates the reading of the Qur'an's *i'jāz* with linguistic aspects (*naẓam*).¹ It seems that this interpretation was greatly influenced by Arabic logic, which became standardized in the 7th-8th centuries AD with the rise of the Arab dynasty as rulers and the establishment of Arabic as the official language.² However, when we read the chronology of the Qur'an, the surahs in the Qur'an are largely related to polemics with its main audience.³ In polemical verses, the power of evidence is paramount because the nature of polemical verses is to refute the claims of their main opponents. Language and all its aspects of beauty are merely a wrapper that contains the power of polemics and are not the main aspect. This paper will focus on the reading of *i'jāz* by emphasizing the aspect of the power of evidence in polemical verses that silence the main opponents of the Qur'an.

By examining the existing literature, we can find that classical and modern works on *i'jāz* vary in terms of their focus. Some of them focus on the prophetic personality. From the Mu'tazilī group, for example, there is *Kitāb Hujjaj al-Nubūwa* by al-Jāhiz (d. 255/868–869) and *Tathbīt Dalā'il al-Nubūwa* by 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī (d. 415/1025).⁴ Shia Ismaili works such as *Kitāb Ithbāt al-Nubūwa* by Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī (d. after 360/971). Works from Sunni, for example, the works of theologian Ash'arī, such as *A'lām al-Nubūwa* written by al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058), and anthologies of hadith by scholars such as Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 430/1038) and al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066). Many Muslim works, including those mentioned above, appeared in a political context where rivalry between Muslims and Christians was

¹ Muritala Alhaji and Ishaq Adebayo, *I'jaz al-Qur'an: 'Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani's Theory of Nazm*, n.d.

² The rise of the Arab dynasty was Muawiyah, during which Arabic was established as the official language of the state. The process of standardizing Arabic as the official language led to the reconstruction of Fusha Arabic into the official language. Because some of the territories conquered by the rulers were not entirely Arab, Arabic language teaching grew. At the same time, there was a process of reconstructing Fusha Arabic so that it could be taught to non-Arabs. Philip K. Hitty, *The History of The Arabs* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1937), 300.

³ Mun'im Sirry, *Polemik Kitab Suci: Tafsir Reformasi Atas Kritik al-Qur'an Terhadap Agama Lain* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2012); Munirul Ikhwani, "Drama Ilahi: Sebuah Upaya Dalam Membaca Kronologi Wahyu Alquran," *Mutawatir: Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadith*, No. 2, Volume 10 (2020).

⁴ Mareike Koertner, *Proving Prophecy Dalā'il Al-Nubūwa Literature as Part of the Scholarly Discourse on Prophecy in Islam* (London: Brill, 2024), 3.

flourishing in the Baghdad region.⁵ Several Christian scholars, such as Theodore Abu Qurah (a student of John of Damascus), attacked Muslim theology and questioned Muhammad's prophethood.⁶ Therefore, it is not surprising that works defending the Prophet Muhammad as the bearer of the message have appeared, such as the work by Muslim mentioned above.

Some Western scholars, such as Tor Andrae and several scholars who followed him, marginalized classical Muslim *i'jāz* works that tended to be glorificatory—in this case, the works of Qaḍi al-'Iyāḍ.⁷ They stated that Muslim works were less historical in nature and were “apologetic” in character.⁸ This opinion is also reinforced by Yusuf Rahman's writing, which states that the works of *i'jāz* al-Qur'an, whether from the Ahlusunnah, Mu'tazilah, or Shi'ah, are shrouded in sectarian ideology.⁹ Therefore, these works obscure the historical aspects of the prophetic legacy and the message it carries.¹⁰

Several modern scholars have focused on the linguistic aspects of the Qur'an as its *i'jāz*. Quraish Shihab, a scholar from Indonesia, is one of the scholars who has taken this approach. He reveals the *i'jāz* in three aspects at once, namely linguistic, scientific indications, and supernatural revelations.¹¹ It seems that Quraish's work summarizes the aspects of *i'jāz* found in classical and modern scholars and does not propose any new opinions. Several other modern researchers, such as Grunebaum, have studied the works of al-Baqillani, which reveal *i'jāz* in terms of language.¹² Busoeri et al. reveal Naẓm al-Jurjani's theory in explaining *i'jāz* al-Qur'an. It is true that Arabic has a unique

⁵ M. J. Kister, ““Do Not Assimilate Yourselves . . . La Tashabbahū,” in *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, Robert Hoyland, Vol. 18 (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 125–50; Sidney H. Griffith, “C Om Parative Religion in the Apologetics of the F Irst C Hristian A Rabic Theologians,” in *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, Robert Hoyland, Vol. 18 (Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 175–200; Jacques Waardenburg, “Muslim Studies of other Religions: T He Medieval Period,” in *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, Robert Hoyland, Vol. 18 (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 211–40; C. H. Becker, “C Hristian Polemic and the Form Ation of Islamic Dogma,” in *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, Robert Hoyland, Vol. 18 (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 241–50; S. D. Goitein, “Minority Selfrule and G Overnm Ent Control in Islam,” in *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, Robert Hoyland, Vol. 18 (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 159–70.

⁶ Néophyte Edelby, “The Legislative Autonom y of C Hristians in the Islamic World,” in *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, Robert Hoyland, Vol. 18 (London & New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 37–80.

⁷ Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ b. Mūsā, *Al-Shifā' Bi-Ta'rif Ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā'*, Alī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī (ed), Vol. 2 (Cairo: T.P, 1977).

⁸ A. J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed: Its Genesis and Historical Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), p. 224. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), 224; Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology: An Extended Survey* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 78.

⁹ Yusuf Rahman, “The Miraculous Nature of Muslim Scriture : A Study of 'Abd al-Jabbar's I'jaz al-Qur'an,” *Islamic Studies* 35, no. 4 (1996): 409–24.

¹⁰ Tor Andrae, *Mohammed The Man and His Faith*, Vol. 1 (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 1936), 9–12.

¹¹ Quraish Shihab, *Mukjizat Al-Qur'an Ditinjau Dari Aspek Kebahasaan, Isyarat Ilmiah, Dan Pemberitaan Gaib* (Jakarta: Mizan, 2006).

¹² Gustav Von Grunebaum, *The Section on Poetry Al-Baqillani: I'jaz al-Qur'an* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1950).

beauty. However, this work has a fundamental flaw, namely that if *i'jāz* exists in the structure of Arabic, non-Arabs who are unfamiliar with the linguistic nuances of Arabic (*dhauq al-lughah*) will find it difficult to understand. Therefore, *i'jāz* seems to be only for Arabs.

Works focusing on the linguistic aspect of *i'jāz* drew a reaction from Ibrahim bin Naẓam, one of the leading figures of the Mu'tazilah school of thought. Ibrahim bin Naẓam took a different approach from the Muslim scholars mentioned above. He argued that *i'jāz* does not lie in the language, as claimed by al-Jurjani, because it is only understood by Arabic speakers, but rather in the meaning and not in the lafaz or language.¹³ Another Mu'tazili, Abu Huẓail for example, reinforced al-Naẓam's opinion. He added that the Qur'an reveals a lot of information about the unseen that existed in the past, such as the destruction of the 'Ad and Iram peoples. The destruction of the 'Iram and 'Ad peoples may have been buried hundreds of years before the emergence of the Qur'an. This information was revealed in order to warn the Quraish of their similarity to the peoples of 'Ad and Iram. The informative truth of this becomes *i'jāz* because the facts about these events are indeed true. In addition to information about the past, the Qur'an also has extraordinary predictive powers regarding future events, such as the victory of the Romans before it happened.¹⁴ This predictive ability is not recorded if we only focus on *i'jāz* in language and *naẓam* as well as the prophetic personality.

The discussion regarding the miraculous nature of the Qur'an was surprised by the appearance of Shahrur, who focused on language but had unique conclusions that had not been considered by classical Muslim scholars. He stated that the miraculous nature of the Qur'an was only contained in the *mutasyābihāt* verses, while in the *muḥkamāt* verses it was not.¹⁵ His main argument is that *mutashābihāt* verses contain a lot of information (*khavar*). The truth of this information proves that the revelation is a miracle because it conveys factual information. These informative verses are only found in *mutashābihāt* because *muḥkamāt* verses do not contain information but commands and prohibitions. Therefore, there is no *i'jāz* in *muḥkamāt* verses.

Considering existing works, discussions related to *i'jāz* can be divided into two main streams. The main stream is on language, while the second stream, which is not as popular, is on meaning. I find the development of works on the *i'jāz* of the Qur'an, especially those that emphasize a linguistic approach, to be problematic. In my understanding, the majority of Arab poetry experts should understand the beauty of the language of the Qur'an, and that should be a factor in attracting them. However, the reality is quite the opposite. Prophet Muhammad did not have many supporters in Mecca, and many even doubted him, both as a person and the message he brought, to the extent that the Prophet had to migrate to Medina to form a new community.

¹³ Muḥamad Abid Al-Jabiri, *Madkhal Ila Al-Qur'an al-Karim: Fi Ta'rif al-Qur'an*. (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wahdat al-Arabiyyah, 2006), 181–86.

¹⁴ Al-Jabiri, *Madkhal Ila Al-Qur'an al-Karim: Fi Ta'rif al-Qur'an*, 184–87.

¹⁵ Muḥammad Shahrur, *Al-Kitāb Wa al-Qur'ān: Qirā'ah Mu'āṣirah* (Beirut: Shirkat al-Maṭbū'ah li al-Tawzī' wa al-Nashr, 2000), 177–79.

I have read that many of the verses of the Qur'an revealed to the Arabs are related to "polemics." The polemical nature of the Qur'an stems from the socio-economic inequality that existed in Mecca at that time. The wealthy, such as the *aḥlāf*, had no sympathy for the poor, who were members of the *muṭayyibūn*.¹⁶ The impact was a loss of solidarity, such as the erosion of tribal unity needed by communities living in the desert. The power of refutation in polemical verses silenced the Arabs (*'ajzun*) and left them unable to escape criticism. However, because they maintained the status quo, incisive criticism did not immediately make them support the Prophet Muhammad; instead, it turned them against him.

Based on this research focus, the academic questions I intend to address in this paper are: first, why does the *i'jāz* of the Qur'an appear in polemical verses? Second, how did these polemical verses influence the people of Mecca? Third, how did the Qur'an's argumentative power function as *i'jāz* in the Meccan context? Based on these research questions, this paper argues that the *i'jāz* of the Qur'an lies in the strength of the evidence presented against the enemies of prophethood. The Qur'an seeks to rebuild the solidarity that once existed within the framework of a new religion. To discuss the focus of this research, I will examine the concept of *i'jāz* in polemical verses within the chronological framework of revelation.

Research Method

This research is qualitative library research. The approach used in this research will employ a contemporary approach known as separating the subject from the object of research (*faṣl al-qāri' 'an al-maqrū'*) by Muḥammad Abid al-Jabiri. The theoretical elements of Jabiri's approach that will be used are *mu'ashiran lahu*, which is placing a text in its historical context, and *tahliḥ al-īdiulojiah* (ideological analysis).¹⁷ The objective is to reveal the concept of *i'jāz* in the Qur'an in relation to the polemical verses of the Makiyah surah.

The method used in this paper is to read the Makiyah surahs and relate them to sources outside the Qur'an, such as sirah and tārikh books as primary sources and several writers of Mecca history, both Orientalists and Muslims, as secondary sources. Several sirah books will be used, such as the work of Ibn Hishām,¹⁸ Ibn Sa'ad,¹⁹ al-Ṭabari,²⁰ dan al-Azraqi.²¹ Then from secondary sources from authors such as Mahmud

¹⁶ Jawad Ali, *Al-Mufaṣṣal Fī Tārīkh al-'Arab Qabla al-Islām*, Volume 4 (Baghdad: Jāmi'atu Baghdad, 1993), 42–43; Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford: Calendron Press, 1960), 6.

¹⁷ Muḥamad Abid Al-Jabiri, *Naḥnu Wa Turāth: Qirā'āt Mu'āṣirat Fī Turāthunā al-Falsafī* (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wahdat al-Arabiyyah, 1993), 21–24.

¹⁸ Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyah*, ed. Umar Abd al-Salam al-Tadmuri, Volume 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1990); Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyah*, Ed. Umar Abd al-Salam al-Tadmuri, Volume 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1990).

¹⁹ Ibn Sa'ad, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Kubrā*, Volume 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2017); Ibn Sa'ad, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Kubrā*, Volume 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2017); Ibn Sa'ad, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Kubrā*, Volume 5 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2017); Ibn Sa'ad, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Kubrā*, Volume 8 (Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2017); Ibn Sa'ad, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Kubrā*, Volume 1.

²⁰ Al-Ṭabari, *Tarikh Al-Umam Wa al-Muluk*, Volume 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1978).

²¹ Al-Azraqi, *Akhbār Al-Makkah* (Maktabat al-Asadi, n.d.).

Ibrahim,²² Daniel Poots,²³ Robertson Smith,²⁴ Michael Bukharin,²⁵ and several other relevant works. The sources outside the Qur'an that I have mentioned above are useful for reading the context of the emergence of the Qur'an and knowing who the communicant (*mukhāṭab*) is who is the target of the polemic. This is useful in order for the concept of *i'jāz* to be contemporary in itself (*mu'āshiran lahu*). In addition to being contemporary in itself, it is also useful for revealing the ideological aspects behind the Makki surahs in relation to the theoretical elements in ideological analysis (*taḥlīl al-iduḥliyyah*).

The *i'jāz* we refer to in this article refers to the concept of *i'jāz* as explained by Abu Hilāl al-'Askarī, a medieval expert on the language of the Qur'an. According to Abu Hilāl, *i'jāz* is *yudāt al-quḍrah* (the opposite of being able).²⁶ He added by comparing the word *quḍrat* with *al-man'u*. *Al-Man'u* is an obstacle that prevents *quḍrah* from being realized. A person who has the physical strength to lift heavy objects, for example, can be called *qādir* or as having *quḍrah*. However, due to various reasons, such as injury, he no longer has the strength. In this case, it does not mean that he does not have *quḍrah*, but that his *quḍrah* is hindered by injury. So injury is the antonym of *quḍrah* and not the antonym of *'ajz*.

I'jāz or *al-'ajz* are different. *I'jāz*, when it appears and is present before someone, the person who receives the *i'jāz* is weak and has no ability to evade it. Their weakness is not because of *al-man'u* but because of the absence of *quḍrah*. A thief, for example, when he is accused and cannot evade the accusation, is weak in denying it. So the evidence is *i'jāz* for the thief. The truth of the accusation with the evidence presented eliminates the thief's ability to evade the truth and accept his crime as an objective accusation. Polemics are essentially the refutation of claims of truth. Polemical verses will have *i'jāz* if they are able to present evidence so that false claims can no longer escape the error of their claims. With this logic, the truth of a polemical verse does not lie in the language used for polemics, but in the truth of the facts so that listeners cannot escape the false claims.

With this line of reasoning, if we read the holy verse *fa'tū biayātin mithlihi* (bring forth a verse similar to the Qur'an), it is not because of the beauty of the language that humans are unable to produce a similar verse, but because of the inability to present a rebuttal accompanied by evidence that can invalidate the polemical verse. This is because of the power of the truth in the polemical verse, so that the listener is unable to refute it. If he were to refute the accusation, then the way he would refute it would not be by invalidating the existing evidence, but by making

²² Mahmood Ibrahim, "Social and Economic Conditions in Pre-Islamic Mecca," International Journal of Middle East Studies, No. 3, Volume 14 (1982).

²³ Daniel T. Potts, "Trans Arabian Routes of The Pre Islamic Period," in The Arabs and Arabia on The Eve of Islam, Ed. F.E Peters, Volume 3 (London: Routledge, n.d.).

²⁴ W. Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1907).

²⁵ Michael. Bukharin, "Mecca on The Caravan Routes in Pre-Islamic Antiquity," in The Encyclopaedia of The Qur'an, vol. 4 (London: Brill, 2001).

²⁶ Abū Hilāl al-'Askari, *Al-Furūq al-Lughawiyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 2018), 128.

accusations outside of the evidence. For example, by accusing the bearer of evidence of being insane (*majnūn*), calling polemical verses magic (*hadza lasiḥrun mubīn*), and accusing them of being fairy tales of the ancestors (*aṣāṭīr al-awwalīn*). Accusations such as *majnūn* and others do not invalidate the truth because they do not provide evidence to refute the truth but rather attack the person bringing the evidence.

The two analytical frameworks discussed above—namely, the contemporary frameworks of al-Jabiri and Abu Hilāl—complement one another. The first is useful for situating the surah within its contextual framework, while the second serves to interpret the evidence drawn from the context as presented by contemporary readings. Using these analytical frameworks, this paper is able to reveal the power of polemical verses that transcends language and verbal structure (*naẓam*).

Result and Discussion

Context of Polemical Verses

When the early surahs were revealed in Mecca, many people did not yet feel that he was a threat.²⁷ However, the situation changed when the Qur'an was revealed and criticism began to emerge. The criticism took the form of "religious liar" (*yukadhdhibu bi al-dīn*),²⁸ woe to the hoarder of wealth,²⁹ the threat of hell for those who are arrogant,³⁰ and so on. The criticism made the object of criticism feel disturbed.

Why did the Quraish feel disturbed by the surah of condemnation? The Quraish were a merchant society with strong religious claims.³¹ In several historical sources, their trade relations existed in several markets in Arabia, such as the Ukaz, Dhu al-Majanna, and Dhu al-Majaz markets.³² These three markets branched out to several regions such as Yemen, Petra, and Yathrib, and were very busy during the ḥaram months.³³ From Petra, it branched out again to South Africa via Sinai. Goods were also transported from Petra to the Damascus region.³⁴ This situation lasted until the war between Byzantium and Persia.³⁵

When the two superpowers went to war, trade conditions also changed. Hashim bin Abd al-Manaf, the great-grandfather of the Prophet Muhammad, along with several of his brothers, engaged in interregional diplomacy to break through four trade routes. Abd al-Shams broke through his diplomatic route to Abyssinia, Hashim himself to the Sham region, Naufal to Persia, and Muṭalib to the Ḥimyar region.³⁶ In

²⁷ Qs. al-ʿAlaq (1-5), al-Mudathir, al-Fīl, al-Quraish, al-ṭīn, al-Balad, dan al-Muzammil.

²⁸ Qs. Al-Māʾūn: 1.

²⁹ Qs. Al-Humazah.

³⁰ Qs. Al-Takāthur.

³¹ Al-Azraqī, *Akḥbār Al-Makkah*, 96; Al-Yaʿqubī, *Tārīkh Al-Yaʿqubī* (Beirut: : Dār al-Ṣadr, 1995), 52–53; Balādhurī, *Ansāb Al-Ashrāf*, Volume 1 (Cairo: Dār al-Fikriyah, 1959), 69.

³² Ibn Ḥabīb, *Al-Munammaq Fī Akḥbār Quraish* (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1985), 42–43.

³³ Ibrahim, "Social and Economic Conditions in Pre-Islamic Mecca," 344–57; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Al-Munammaq Fī Akḥbār Quraish*, 41–42.

³⁴ Ibrahim, "Social and Economic Conditions in Pre-Islamic Mecca," 345–46.

³⁵ Potts, "Trans Arabian Routes of The Pre Islamic Period," 45–81.

³⁶ Al-Ṭabari, *Tārīkh Al-Umam Wa al-Mulūk*, Volume 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah., 1978), 251–52; Gene W. Heck, "Arabia Without Spices: An Alternate Hypothesis," *Journal of The American Oriental Society*, No. 3, vol. 123 (2003): 547–70.

addition to pursuing diplomatic channels between countries, Hashim and several of his brothers also established relationships with local tribes.³⁷ The local tribes referred to are those located along international trade routes. Some of them are the Bedouin tribes.³⁸ Hashim took this action to secure trade routes because several tribes along those routes could seize any goods being traded. For the sake of security, Hashim established relationships by offering to sell their goods without charging any fees and returning all profits to them. This cooperation was known as *jiwar* and *ilāf*.³⁹

Some historians, such as Ailin Qian, report that goods such as dates and oil were traded along this route, obtained from Ṭāif.⁴⁰ Then, because Mecca was an arid and barren region, the Arabs also traded vegetables and dates, as well as some vegetables from Yathrib. In addition to Yathrib, the Arabs also imported wheat from Egypt and Yamamah.⁴¹ Then, wine was also imported from Sham to be traded in three Arab markets, Ukaz, Dhu al-Majanna, and Dhu al-Majaz.⁴²

Gene Heck, a Western researcher and historian, reports that the Arabs were already familiar with mining. The main mineral mined was gold. Some of the areas where gold mines were located included Nuqrah, Mindah, Mahdu Dhahab, and Baḥran. Many of the miners came from Ṭāif, Yathrib, and Wadī Qura. The mined goods were processed into jewelry and sold in several Arab markets. This became a potential source of strong purchasing power for the Arabs.⁴³ Some Arab tribes, such as the Quraish, also organized these trading activities. They formed an institution called *Dār al-Nadwah*.⁴⁴ This institution has several subdivisions, including *Hijabah* and *Siqāyah*. *Hijabah* handles matters related to the Ka'aba and *Hajj* rituals, while *Siqāyah* handles trade and political matters. Its main objective is to manage trade and *Hajj* rituals properly, as both are sources of income for them.

Commercial activities and the existence of a continuous and long-standing management organization led to rapid economic growth in Mecca. Maxim Rodinson, in *Islam and Capitalism*, wrote about the growth of capitalism in Mecca before the

³⁷ Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, 10–15; Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, 184; Yohanan Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam: Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 161–62; Sa'ad, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Kubrā*, Volume 8, 15; Sa'ad, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Kubrā*, Volume 5, 57.

³⁸ Sa'ad, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Kubrā*, Volume 8, 15–16; Sa'ad, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Kubrā*, Volume 5, 57.

³⁹ Ibn Sa'ad, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Kubrā*, Volume 1, 64–65; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Al-Munammaq Fī Akhbār Quraish*, 43–44; Kister M.J., "Mecca and Tamīm (Aspects of Their Relations)", *Journal of The Economic and Social History of The Orient*, No. 3, Volume 20 (1977): 113–60.

⁴⁰ Ailin Qian, "Spice, Spiced, Wine and Pure Wine," No. 2, Volume 128 (2008): 311–12.

⁴¹ Maraqten M., "Wine Drinking and Wine Prohibition in Arabia Before Islam", *Proceeding of The Seminar For Arabian Studies Held at Manchester on 1992* Volume 23 (1993): 96–112.

⁴² Irfan Shahid, "Exploring Trade Practice and Market Before and After The Advent of Islam in Arabia", *Journal of Emerging Economies & Islamic Research*, No. 2, Volume 6 (2018): 11; Irfan Shahid, "Ukaz," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Ed. P.J. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. Van Donzel and W. P. Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

⁴³ Heck, "Arabia Without Spices: An Alternate Hypothesis," 548–75; Gene W. Heck, "Gold Mining in Arabia and The Rise of The Islamic State", *Journal of The Economic and Social History of The Orient*, No. 3, Volume 42 (1999): 365–95; Bukharin, "Mecca on The Caravan Routes in Pre-Islamic Antiquity," 115–17.

⁴⁴ Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyah*, Volume 2, 5; Muhammad Nazer Ka Ka Khel, "Political System in Pre-Islamic Arabia", *Islam Studies*, NO. 4, Volume 20 (1981): 374–92.

emergence of Islam.⁴⁵ Even with this management, Mecca became an international trading center as the war between Byzantium and Persia unfolded. Mecca became a meeting point for traders from the East, such as Ceylon, and the West, such as Byzantium. The stalemate in diplomatic relations due to the war between Byzantium and Persia became a new ray of hope for economic growth in Mecca.

Unfortunately, however, along with economic growth and capitalism came internal conflict between the Quraish tribes. The Banu Hashim group was largely ousted by the Banu Abd al-Dār.⁴⁶ Many of the Hashim clan suffered poverty amid capitalist growth. Meanwhile, the wealth of the Abd al-Dār clan increased. The feud between the two groups could not be reconciled because an oath was made to not be friendly with one another. This oath divided the Quraish into two groups, namely the *Aḥlaf* and the *Muṭayyibun*.⁴⁷

Abu Talib was indeed the chief of the Banu Hashim tribe. However, his leadership was largely controlled by a wealthy group, the *Aḥlaf*. Moreover, Abu Talib himself was not a wealthy man. It is possible that he was unanimously elected as chief of the Quraish tribe because of his lineage. However, in terms of control, he could not do much. An indicator of this is that Ṭalib also agreed to advise the Prophet Muhammad to stop his call. However, due to Muhammad's persistence, Abu Ṭalib's call was rejected.⁴⁸

Amidst tribal divisions and increasing prosperity among the Quraish, the Prophet Muhammad and his revelations appeared. In the early surahs, such as Surah al-'Alaq (1-5), Surah al-Mudathir, Surah al-Fil, al-Quraish, Surah al-Tin, Surah al-Balad, and Surah al-Muzammil, the Quraish did not react because these surahs were revealed in connection with the formation of the prophetic personality.⁴⁹ However, when polemical verses began to appear, starting with Qs. al-Ma'un, Qs. al-Humazah, Qs. al-Takāthur, and so on, the Quraish, especially the *aḥlaf* group, reacted with hostility.

In al-Ma'un, the Qur'an calls them religious hypocrites because they scold orphans and do not encourage feeding the poor with the wealth they possess. Al-Humazah condemns those who hoard wealth (wealthy merchants) who are preoccupied with accumulating riches. Al-Takāthur rebukes them, stating that their wealth and possessions have led them astray because they have ignored the prophetic call.

The reaction of the Quraish group was caused by the revelation's condemnation of them and the political impact of Prophet Muhammad's message. With this condemnation, the Quraish's pride and economic stability began to be disrupted. At the same time, tribes who felt benefited by the revelation began to support the Prophet

⁴⁵ Maxime Rodinson, *Islam and Capitalisme* (New York: Pantheon Book, 1966).

⁴⁶ Balādhurī, *Ansāb Al-Ashrāf*, Volume 1, 60–63; Ali, *Al-Mufaṣṣal Fī Tārīkh al-'Arab Qabla al-Islām*, Volume 4, 42–45; Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 6; M. A. Shaban, *Islamic History: A New Interpretation 600-750 A.D* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 4–6.

⁴⁷ Balādhurī, *Ansāb Al-Ashrāf*, Volume 1, 60–63.

⁴⁸ Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyah*, Volume 2, 43–45.

⁴⁹ Ikhwan, "Drama Ilahi: Sebuah Upaya Dalam Membaca Kronologi Wahyu Alquran.,"

Muhammad.⁵⁰ The condemnation of the revelations against them and the political repercussions of the message preached by the Prophet Muhammad sparked a reaction from the Quraish merchants. The main factor was that the Quraish's pride and economic stability were beginning to be threatened. At the same time, tribes that felt they stood to benefit from the narrative of the revelations began to support the Prophet Muhammad.⁵¹

By understanding the narrative of the revelation and the unequal socioeconomic context of Mecca, it becomes clear that the central ideology of the Meccan revelations was to oppose criticism of the wealthy merchants. Meanwhile, those who opposed the revelation were people who were defending the status quo through their wealth. These two groups represent two distinct ideologies.

The Quraish's reaction to Muhammad's revelatory messages, which were critical in nature, was perceived as undeniable by the Quraish. In this regard, the early Meccan surahs indicate that *i'jāz* functions to reveal the truth of Arab reality. With the available evidence, it silences its listeners ('ajz) so that they cannot evade it. However, because they preferred the status quo over the evidence of its truth, one of the consequences was opposition.

The *I'jāz* of Polemical Verses

The early surahs that mark the emergence of condemnation are al-Ma'ūn. In this surah, God refers to the wealthy as religious hypocrites (*yukadhdhibu bi al-dīn*). Their hypocrisy is characterized by their mistreatment of orphans and their reluctance to feed the poor. To cover up their stinginess, they flaunt their prayers in front of many people so that they will be considered good people. However, behind this ritualistic piety, they prevent themselves from feeding the poor around them. Surah al-Humazah reveals that behind their stinginess and ritualism, they are people who always accumulate wealth and seem to want to keep it forever. The prosperity they have received and their position as elites have made them forget their sympathy for others. Even though they come from the same ancestor, Fihri, and are descendants of the Prophet Ishmael.⁵²

The Qur'an's condemnation of the wealthy class of Mecca as religious hypocrites is not without basis. In their daily lives, despite the wealth they have received, there is much poverty around them. Jawad Ali informs us that there are the *mu'zib* and *mukli*, terms used to refer to people who have gone bankrupt and moved to the interior.⁵³ Some of the poor also locked themselves in their homes to avoid begging, and died of starvation with their families. When the aḥlāf found out about this

⁵⁰ Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 88–95.

⁵¹ Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyah*, Volume 2, 5–7; Balādhurī, *Ansāb Al-Ashrāf*, Volume 1, 229; Al-Ṭabari, *Tārīkh Al-Umam Wa al-Mulūk*, Volume 2, 336; Al-Baihaqi, *Dalā'il Al-Nubuwwah*, Volume 2 (Mesir: Dar al-Rayyan wa Ma'rifati Shahibi al-Syarii'ah, T.Th), 82; Ibn Sa'ad, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Kubra.*, Volume 1, 208; Ibn Atsīr, *Al-Kamil Fi al-Tarikh*, Volume 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1978), 87.

⁵² Abū Hishām Abdullāh Ibn Ṣadīq, *Al-Ussrat al-Qurashiyah A'yān Makata al-Maḥmiyah* (Jiddah: al-Mamlakah al-'Arabiyah, 1983), 24–26; Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyah*, Volume 1, 22–24.

⁵³ Jawad Ali, *Al-Mufaṣṣal Fī Tārīkh al-'Arab Qabla al-Islām.*, Volume 5 (Baghdad: Jami'atu Baghdad, 1993), 56.

and were asked to share their wealth, they said, "Why should we feed them? Isn't Allah the provider?"⁵⁴

Al-Qurṭubī, an Andalusian exegete, recounts the story of food eaten by starving people known as *aṣḥāb al-ṣulbi*. This group was known for boiling bones to extract the marrow and mixing it with blood as a substitute for staple foods that they could not obtain. There are even some accounts that mention that some of the poor people of Mecca once served Prophet Muhammad a dish of boiled bone marrow when he visited their homes.⁵⁵

Walid bin Mughirah, a prominent figure from the Makhzūm clan, once issued a law of cutting off the hands of thieves. This law was decided by the aḥlaf group in order to protect their property from theft by the poor people around them.⁵⁶ Amidst the prevailing poverty, the rich are well-fed and protected from the threat of the poor by the law of cutting off hands that they enacted to protect the wealth they have acquired.

In this case, the condemnation of religious hypocrites, counting their wealth and making them negligent as written in the early Makīyah surah is not something they do not witness. Their reluctance to feel compassion for those around them has a coherent relationship with the condemnation of the Qur'an revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. Basically, they cannot escape the condemnation of revelation and feel its *i'jāz*. However, even though they feel it, it does not mean that they accept and submit to the truth. The opposite is true. They ignore the Qur'an and choose the wealth they have at the expense of the tribal brotherhood that binds them (*wa tuḥibūn al-māla ḥubban jammā*).⁵⁷

Their choice of wealth prompted the Quraish to oppose the revelation sent down to the Prophet Muhammad. Allah responded to the Quraish's attitude in Qs. Alaq: 6-19. In this surah, Allah mentions that they were tyrants (*layaṭghā*), feeling content with relying on their wealth, and feeling no need for Allah's guidance. However, even though the Prophet Muhammad was in the right, the Quraish's resistance also troubled him because Muhammad did not yet have power. In this situation, Allah responded to the Prophet Muhammad's difficult circumstances by revealing Surah al-Inshirah. This surah was revealed so that the Prophet Muhammad would remain optimistic because alongside difficulties there would be ease. Allah also reminded the Prophet Muhammad, through Surah al-Duha, that He had guided him away from the misguidance of his people and blessed him with a comfortable life. Allah also forbade the Prophet from acting like them, such as rebuking orphans and scolding the poor who asked for help.

To strengthen the Prophet Muhammad in defending the weak and confronting the tyranny of Mecca, Allah motivated him with two surahs: Qs. al-Kauthar and al-

⁵⁴ Ali, *Al-Mufaṣṣal Fī Tārīkh al-'Arab Qabla al-Islām*, Volume 5, 42.

⁵⁵ Al-Qurṭubī, *Jāmi'u al-Aḥkām al-Qur'an*, Volume 20 (Kairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyah., 1964), 204.

⁵⁶ Al-Qurṭubī, *Jāmi'u al-Aḥkām al-Qur'an*, Volume 6 (Kairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyah, 1964), 160.

⁵⁷ Qs. al-Fajr: 20

Qadar. Qs. al-Kauthar is a motivation for abundant worldly pleasures, while al-Qadar is a motivation that the revelation that came to him on that appointed night was the best night of all nights. And this was revealed only to a Prophet chosen by Allah, namely Muhammad.

In addition to strengthening the Prophet Muhammad, Allah also threatened the Quraish with information about the Day of Judgment. Surah al-Ghāshiyah confirms that those who oppose the Prophet Muhammad will experience a painful life when the Day of Judgment comes. Surah al-Naba' explains that this painful afterlife is a punishment for their actions. In Surah al-Inshiqaq, Allah reveals His power. The earth that is inhabited will be destroyed, and humans will meet Allah to account for everything they have done. Those whose deeds are good will receive their record of deeds. Those who believe will meet their families in a state of joy.

Information about previous peoples who suffered misfortune in the hereafter is also revealed. Qs. al-Nāzi'āt was revealed to make them aware of their wrong attitude towards the Prophet Muhammad. In Qs. Al-Burūj, Allah also shows His hatred for those who oppose the believers. The events in Qs. al-Burūj took place in Yemen, where they dug trenches and tortured believers because they only worshipped Allah.⁵⁸ God's threat is reinforced in Surah al-Mursalat regarding the certainty of a terrible fate that will surely befall those who reject the Prophet and the believers.

From the existing threats, how does Allah provide an empirical description of the mysterious world, namely the hereafter? Allah also reveals His power in destroying the universe with descriptions that can be imagined by their perceptions. The empirical description of this mysterious matter is reinforced by the fate of those who denied the prophetic teachings in the past. The news of the fate of those who came before is stored in their memory because the subjects of the stories—such as the story of the *aṣḥāb al-aḥdūd* and the fate of the previous prophets' followers—are still fresh in the minds of the Quraish.⁵⁹

The empirical description of the afterlife, reinforced by the fate of previous nations, serves as an indication of the miraculous nature of the Qur'an in polemical verses. The miraculous aspect is that the Quraish could not provide evidence to refute that they were different from previous nations who were able to avoid a bad fate. The same thing would befall them because their actions were the same. On the other hand, the stories of previous nations also serve as proof of truth because they are factual. Thus, the form of *i'jāz* in the polemical Makiyah surah is the coherent relationship between the revelation's condemnation and reality. Those who witness the relationship between revelation and everyday reality but deny it are called disbelievers. Conversely, those who witness their mistakes, submit, and admit them are called believers.

⁵⁸ Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri, *Fahm Al-Qur'an al-Ḥakīm. Al-Tafsīr al-Waḍiḥ Ḥasba Tartīb al-Nuzūl*, Volume 1 (Maghrib: Dār al-Baiḍla', 2009), 103–6.

⁵⁹ al-Jabiri, *Fahm Al-Qur'an al-Ḥakīm. Al-Tafsīr al-Waḍiḥ Ḥasba Tartīb al-Nuzūl*, Volume 1, 105–6.

The Reaction of the Quraish and the Aspect of *I'jāz* in the Response to Revelation

The power of condemnatory diction, such as *yukadhdhibu* (liar), *takāthur* (boastful), *lumazah* (slanderer), and so on, undermined the Quraish's claim as guardians of the Ka'aba. This triggered the Quraish's reaction against the Prophet Muhammad. The Quraish began to fight back by uniting their forces to stem the influence of the revelation that was beginning to form a new religious community. The Quraish's reaction was to publish the *ṣaḥīfah*, which affirmed the boundaries between the two communities. In the *ṣaḥīfah*, the Quraish prohibited intermarriage between the two communities and trade between them.

The Qur'an responded to the attitude of the Quraish by revealing Surah al-Najm, in which the revelation began to touch upon their divinity. In Surah al-Najm, the gods of the Quraish, such as al-Lāta, Uzza, and Manāt, were merely the product of baseless imagination. This was in contrast to the revelation that came to the Prophet Muhammad. Allah affirms that the revelation that came to the Prophet Muhammad is true from Him and not from his imagination. After that, Allah encouraged the community of believers to turn away from the Quraish even though their power was united: Surah al-Najm: 29.

Then in Surah al-Waqi'ah, Allah begins to name two communities as *aṣḥāb maimanah* (the right group, namely the prophetic community) and *aṣḥāb al-mash'amah* (the left group, namely the *ṣaḥīfah* Qurasih community). The topic of the Last Day arises in relation to the fate of these two communities in the Hereafter, where the right group will be in Paradise while the left group will suffer torment in Hell. The theme of hell and the severity of punishment is described again by Allah in a metaphorical form. For example, the sky is like molten silver (*al-samāu ka al-muhli*), mountains are like wool (*al-jibālu ka al-'ihni*),⁶⁰ the heat of hellfire can burn the scalp (*nazā'atan li al-sawā*).⁶¹ Allah also emphasizes that the Quraish community that published the *ṣaḥīfah* will be of no use in the hereafter.⁶² Even their closest relatives, such as children, wives, and siblings, will not be able to help them.⁶³

The painful narrative about the afterlife above was presented by the Qur'an to the Quraish in relation to the religious beliefs that they believed united their group. In this case, the function of religion is to unite the community because it provides a sense of security and solidarity.⁶⁴ The narratives contained in the three Surahs above are refutations of the Quraish's unfounded religious imagination. These refutations are essentially *i'jāz*. It is miraculous because their religious solidarity is built on unfounded religious beliefs. Meanwhile, the basis of the religion revealed to Muhammad is explained in Surah al-Najm, which begins with Allah's oath, "*wa al-Najmi idhā hawā*"

⁶⁰ Qs. al-Ma'arij: 8-9.

⁶¹ Qs. al-Ma'arij: 16.

⁶² Qs. al-Ma'arij: 10-11

⁶³ Qs. al-Ma'arij: 11-14.

⁶⁴ Steven Pinker, "The Evolusionary Psycology of Religion," in *WHere God and Science Meet: How Brain and Evolutionary Studies Alter Our Understanding of Religion*, Patrick McNamara (ed), Volume 1 (United State of America: An imprint of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 2006), 2-4.

(by the star when it sinks).⁶⁵ Then Allah revealed the process through His words, that Muhammad was not mistaken,⁶⁶ he said it was not out of lust,⁶⁷ The revelation was taught to Muhammad by the Almighty (*syadīd al-quwā*),⁶⁸ and the following verses.

Feeling touched by his divine dimension, Quraish reacted more harshly. He began to torture some of the followers of the Prophet Muhammad. Bilal bin Abi Rabah, Amar bin Yasir and his father, Sumaiyah, the mother of Amar bin Yasir, were tortured. Some of the followers of the Prophet Muhammad began to migrate to Habshy to seek asylum due to the poor conditions in Mecca. Prophet Muhammad remained in Mecca because he was from the Banu Hashim clan, which the Quraish aḥlaf did not dare to touch. However, this did not mean that he was without pressure. Several members of the Quraish began negotiations with Abu Ṭalib as Muhammad's main protector. With strong motivation and determination, Prophet Muhammad rejected their negotiations.

In this situation, the prophetic community only had the power of argument and the truth of revelation. The prophetic community did not yet have the power to resist the Quraish. As a result, the prophetic community was scattered. The weak were tortured while the others had to migrate to Habshy. However, Allah did not remain silent. Because in Mecca, Prophet Muhammad only had the truth of revelation and the power of argument, Allah sent down another revelation to strengthen the prophetic community. Qs. al-Dharyāt was revealed, raising again the theme of the previous prophets. In Surah al-Dharyāt, the name of Prophet Ibrahim, who was the forefather of the Prophets and also the forefather of the Arabs as the builder of the Ka'bah, was mentioned. The name of Prophet Musa was also mentioned in this surah in relation to the existence of Judaism in Mecca. Prophet Nuh was also mentioned because he was the forefather of all human races. The last one is the mention of Prophet Salih because the traces of his site are still witnessed by the Quraish. They witnessed the traces of their destruction on their trading journey, "*wa innakum latamarrūna 'alaihim muṣbiḥīn* (and indeed you pass by their traces in the morning)."⁶⁹

The appearance of the narratives of the previous prophets in this section is to condemn the actions of the Quraish. Many of the followers of the prophets mentioned committed acts of disbelief similar to those of the Quraish. This is also part of the miracle because the news of the previous followers and the consequences of their acts of disbelief are facts and cannot be denied. In addition, the story was also relevant to the Quraish because they were a Semitic people, just like the previous prophets. On the side of the Prophet Muhammad, the stories of the previous prophets also served to strengthen his authority as the bearer of God's message because he was part of the previous prophets as a noble person. This was also part of the *i'jāz* for the Quraish and for the Prophet Muhammad because his prophetic authority could not be denied.

⁶⁵ Qs. al-Najm: 1.

⁶⁶ Qs. al-Najm: 2

⁶⁷ Qs. al-Najm: 3

⁶⁸ Qs. al-Najm: 5

⁶⁹ Qs. al-Ṣaffāt: 138

However, because the Quraish's interest in maintaining their status quo was stronger than the truth of the Qur'an, the stories of the previous prophets did not make the Quraish understand. This made the Prophet Muhammad sad, and Allah advised him not to be like the Prophet Jonah, who wanted to run away from his mission and ended up in the belly of a fish.⁷⁰ In addition to giving advice, Allah also strengthened the Prophet Muhammad by recounting the story of Maryam. In Surah Maryam, Maryam gave birth to the Prophet Isa without being married, proving that if Allah wills something impossible, it will still happen. The story of the Prophet Zakariya, whose wife was able to conceive even though she was old, also illustrates how Allah manifests His power even when it seems impossible. In a different surah, namely Surah Naba', Allah also threatens the enemies of the Prophet Muhammad that they will be punished. They are also threatened with punishment for denying blessings: Surah al-Raḥmān.

The difficult circumstances experienced by the Prophet Muhammad were also experienced by the prophets before him. Surah al-Zukhruf and Surah al-Anbiya encouraged the Prophet to remain strong, reminding him that the task of prophethood is a heavy one. This strengthened the Prophet Muhammad's conviction that hardship is part of this noble task and will lead the bearer of this task to nobility as well.

From the surahs that contain motivation to strengthen the Prophet Muhammad, it is clear that *i'jāz* is not only related to proving himself to his main enemies, but also to the bearer of the message, namely the Prophet Muhammad himself. This is because Muhammad himself was an ordinary human being like any other. He also experienced sadness and hardship when carrying out his prophetic duties. With surahs that strengthen and motivate the Prophet, the aspect of *i'jāz* is the power to "transform" an ordinary human being into a noble one because he became strong enough to carry out the heavy task of humanity.

***I'jāz* in the Surahs of the Late Meccan Period**

The end of the Mecca period was marked by the deaths of Abu Ṭālib and Khadijah. These two people were known as the Prophet's protectors while he was in Mecca. With the death of Abu Ṭālib, leadership of the tribe passed to the enemy, Abu Jahal. This made the situation even more difficult for the Prophet Muhammad and his community, as they no longer had a main protector. On the other hand, the opposition to the Prophet grew stronger because, in addition to being the wealthy and influential group in Mecca, they also held the leadership of the tribe.

With Abu Jahal in charge, they had the power to influence society. Surah al-Furqān was revealed, in which the Qur'an refers to itself as al-Furqān. It is the discriminator. This means that with the revelation of the Qur'an, the people of Mecca were divided into two communities: the prophets and their opponents. The word Furqan actually shows the aspect of *i'jāz* because it describes the reality of the emergence of these two groups. In this case, the Qur'an did not choose the words *al-*

⁷⁰ Ibn Qarnas explained that the meaning of the belly of the fish was not literal, but rather a terrible situation that befell the Prophet Jonah when he ran away from his mission. Ibn Qarnas, *Ahsan Al-Qashash: Tarikh al-Islam Kama Warada Mina al-Mashdar Ma'a Tartib as-Sur Hasba an-Nuzul*. (German: al-Kamel Verlag, 2010), 382.

Dhikr, al-Qur'an, al-Kitāb, but chose the word *al-Furqān* (the discriminator) because in reality two different groups did emerge.

In Surah al-Furqān, we can read how the opposition to the prophethood began to raise issues regarding the message brought by the Prophet Muhammad. These issues were like *asāṭīru al-awwalīn* (fables)⁷¹ and *ifkun iftarāhu wa a'ānu 'alaihi qoumun ākharūn* (a fabricated story that was aided by another group).⁷² They also began to profile prophecies to reject the presence of the Prophet Muhammad, saying that the so-called Prophet was not someone who walked in the market, ate like humans, and walked in the market, but rather an angel.⁷³ The envoy should also bring great wealth and create gardens that produce abundant food.⁷⁴

Quraish's argument describing the profile of the prophet was refuted by Allah. Surah al-Nahl emphasizes that the question of who He will send is entirely His right and consideration and does not follow the criteria that they imagine.⁷⁵ The God who chose Muhammad is the God who created humans from semen (*nutfah*),⁷⁶ who raises livestock so that you can eat their meat,⁷⁷ carrying cargo to be transported to various countries,⁷⁸ who created horses, mules, and camels to be ridden,⁷⁹ bringing rain and growing plants,⁸⁰ and so on. In this context, the God who chose Muhammad is the God who created the pleasures and comforts they enjoy. With His pleasure and power, He chose Muhammad. The God who chose Muhammad as His agent is the same God who chose the earlier prophets, who walked in the marketplace, ate, and worked. They were also rejected by their people, just as the Quraish rejected the Prophet Muhammad. This means that their imagination of a messenger like an angel never occurred in history.

However, because the Quraish still could not accept Muhammad as God's messenger, Surah al-Aḥqāf and Surah al-Ghāfir were revealed to emphasize that those who doubted what the Prophet Muhammad conveyed would suffer the same fate as previous nations. And finally, what Prophet Muhammad brought was the same as the revelation brought by their forefathers, namely Prophet Ibrahim: Surah al-A'raf. Amidst the pressure of Quraish's political rhetoric, Allah showed His support for the Prophet Muhammad. In addition to supporting the Prophet Muhammad and condemning his enemies, Allah also emphasized that Quraish's disbelief, which made the situation difficult for the Prophet and his supporters, was part of a test of their faith: Qs. al-Ankabūt.

Then Allah comforted the Prophet Muhammad by recounting the stories of previous prophets. The story that was recounted was that of the Prophet Yusuf in

⁷¹ Qs. Al-Furqān: 4

⁷² Qs. Al-Furqān: 5

⁷³ Qs. Al-Furqān: 7

⁷⁴ Qs. Al-Furqān: 8

⁷⁵ Qs. Al-Nahl: 2

⁷⁶ Qs. Al-Furqān: 4

⁷⁷ Qs. Al-Furqān: 5

⁷⁸ Qs. Al-Furqān: 7

⁷⁹ Qs. Al-Furqān: 8

⁸⁰ Qs. Al-Furqān: 9-10

Surah Yusuf. The Prophet Yusuf was a prophet who was hated by his brothers, just like the Prophet Muhammad. The Quraish and the Prophet Muhammad were essentially brothers. Both the Prophet Muhammad and his enemies were descended from Quṣay bin Kilab. Muhammad's main enemies came from the tribe of Abd al-Shams, who was the older brother of Hashim bin Abd al-Manaf, Muhammad's great-grandfather. Abd al-Shams allied himself with the Makhzūm tribe and other tribes to suppress the call to prophethood. The treatment of Muhammad's brothers was similar to that of the brothers of the Prophet Yusuf. They threw the Prophet Yusuf into a well, just as the Quraish expelled the Prophet Muhammad. However, at the end of the story, the Prophet Yusuf became the ruler of Egypt, which was a sign that the Prophet Muhammad would also become a king like the Prophet Yusuf. But not in Mecca, because there Muhammad was expelled by his brothers. Muhammad would later become king in Medina after he migrated, just as Prophet Yusuf became king of Egypt after migrating from Jerusalem.

Inspired by the revelation of Surah Yusuf, Prophet Muhammad began to think about finding another location for his preaching. Ṭāif was his main target before meeting the group from Medina. However, because he was rejected in Ṭāif, he returned to Mecca and finally met the group from Medina. This meeting led the Prophet to migrate and find a new community. With this meeting, the Prophet Muhammad became king in Medina, just as the Prophet Joseph had been.

Returning to the question of Quraish's imagination. The profile of Allah's messenger that became Quraish's dream and the Qur'an's rebuttal above show that the right to choose an agent is based on Allah's subjective choice. However, Allah has a supporting argument. Allah, who sent the Prophet Muhammad, is the One who created livestock, sent down rain, and grew plants that they enjoyed. With His power, He can create ease for humans, where Allah's choice to send Muhammad is also part of His power. If they can enjoy plants, livestock, and everything else on earth, why would Muhammad, who was chosen by the same Allah who created these pleasures, not give them the same pleasures? This logic is contained in Qs. al-Nahl.

From the surahs revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, many verses show the dialectic between God and His creatures. Some examples include when the Quraish made statements, then refuted them. In different surahs, on the one hand Allah condemns the Quraish, on the other hand He supports the prophetic community. On other occasions, when the Qur'an refutes the enemies of prophethood, at the same time, Allah also tests the strength of faith of His supporters. Then, when Allah sent the Prophet Muhammad, which put him in difficulty, at the same time Allah comforted him. Thus, the polemical model of the Qur'an is dialectical in nature. The power of argument and the destructive force of the diction used in the Qur'an made it impossible for Quraish to avoid polemics. However, Quraish had political power, while the Prophet Muhammad did not. The weakness of their arguments was covered up by displaying their political power. With their political power, the Quraish suppressed the truth that existed in the prophetic community. That truth was drowned out by the emergence of the Quraish's political power. The defeat of this political power forced the Prophet

Muhammad to seek other alternatives to realize the message of the Qur'an. In this case, Medina was a possible choice from among the various alternatives available.

Conclusion

From the above explanation, the following conclusions can be drawn regarding the *i'jāz* of the Qur'an in polemical surahs: First, the argumentative power of the Qur'an contained in polemical surahs is a dimension of the Qur'an's *i'jāz* that is often marginalized in scholarly studies of the Qur'an. Although linguistic aspects—such as the beauty of the language and the uniqueness of the phrasing (*naẓm*), as frequently emphasized by classical scholars—are also important in revealing the truth of the message, the primary aspect underpinning the argumentation is its fundamental basis. Why is this so? Because the Qur'an emerged within the context of Mecca's unequal socio-economic conditions, where the Quraish elite enjoyed economic prosperity while the vulnerable were oppressed and marginalized. In this situation, the Makkan verses served to expose the social injustices occurring within society. The condemnation of behaviors such as berating orphans, hoarding wealth, and refusing to help the poor demonstrates that the *i'jāz* of the Qur'an operates by “refuting false claims to truth” within the Quraish's religious ideology.

Second, the Quraish's fierce reaction to the revelation actually serves as clear evidence of the Qur'an's power to challenge unjust social structures. Thus, the *i'jāz* of the Qur'an also functions as a moral force that embodies empirical truth and the power of social transformation, beyond mere linguistic considerations. The polemical verses serve as the main pillar in silencing the claims of arrogance and complacency of the Quraish—not because of the beauty of the language, but because the truth they contain is undeniable. Furthermore, *i'jāz* also has a spiritual dimension: it strengthens the Prophet Muhammad as the bearer of the message amidst intense pressure. The surahs revealed to fortify the Prophet Muhammad—such as al-Ḍuḥā, al-Inshirah, and al-Kauthar—demonstrate that *i'jāz* not only weakens opponents but also transforms the messenger into a resilient and noble individual. Third, the primary power of *i'jāz* as a whole is to invigorate moral strength throughout human history. Through this moral strength, the *i'jāz* of the Qur'an must be understood as the power of truth manifested through polemical verses that refute false claims, shake up the social status quo, and affirm the prophetic mission. Language serves as a beautiful vehicle for this central message because the majority of Arabs are masters of poetry.

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