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مسیح

MASUMA ABDUL-MUHIT

Summative  
Notes

# THE QUR'AN AND ITS STUDY

*An In-Depth Exploration of Islam's Sacred Scripture*

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# The Quran & Its Study

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# Part 1: Arabic & The Quran

## CHAPTER 1 - THE LANGUAGE OF THE QUR'ĀN

### Section 1: The Arabic Tongue

Arabic was divinely chosen as the language of the final revelation due to its **unique linguistic qualities**. The author draws heavily on 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad:

- Arabic uses the **full vocal tract**, making use of every place of articulation - making it, in al-'Aqqad's words, "a **complete musical instrument**"
- The Arabic alphabet **omits no place of articulation**, distributing sounds along the vocal tract with precision
- The **ḍād sound is uniquely Arabic** - the one sound that distinguishes it from all other languages
- Arabic uses the **wazn (phonic pattern) as the structural backbone of all parts of speech** - connecting sound to meaning systematically (e.g., all derivatives of nazara share a phonic logic)
- The Qur'an is described as "**clear Arabic speech**" (16:103) precisely because of these features



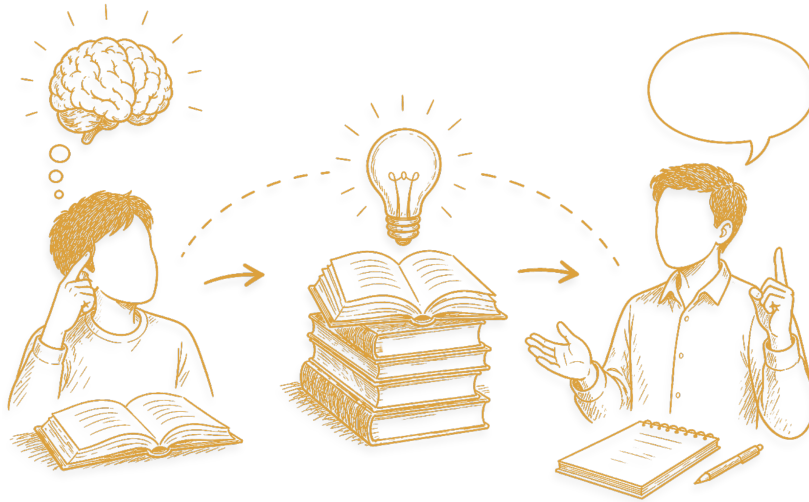
Arabic is a poetic language in its very sounds, vocabulary, and grammar - superior to poetry while remaining unique prose. The Qur'an neither rhymes nor follows metre, yet accommodates musical recitation and is memorised with remarkable ease.

### Section 2: The Arabs & The Qur'ān

God chose the Arabs as bearers of the final message not for their behaviour - which was flawed - but for their **natural qualities and talents**.

Drawing on Ibn Taymiyyah:

“Knowledge has a start which is the mental ability to understand and retain, and a final point which is the logical ability to express and explain.”



The Arabs excelled in both. Their distinction rested on:

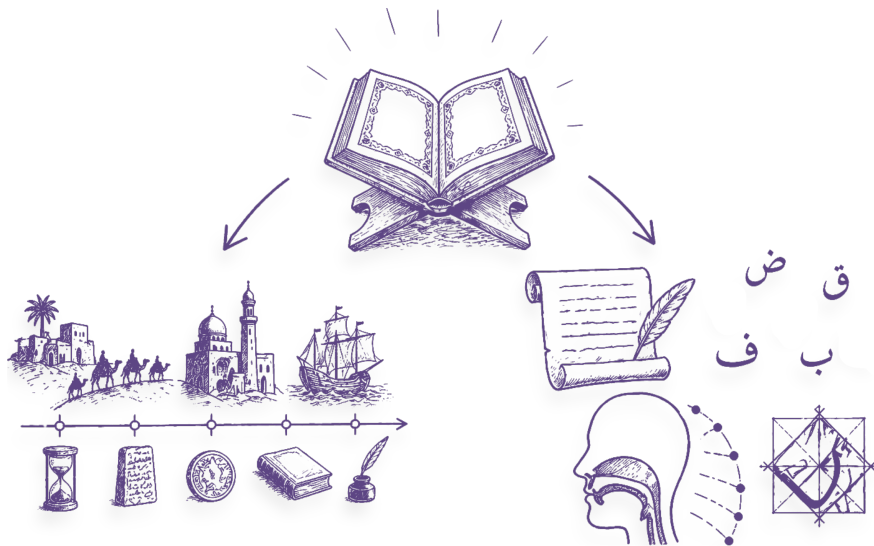
- Useful knowledge - mental capacity to understand, retain, and articulate
- Good action - ethics rooted in personal instinct, including generosity, forbearance, and courage

Their pre-Islamic vices (drinking, gambling, burying daughters) were paradoxically rooted in noble instincts gone astray - generosity, honour, justice. The Indian scholar Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī noted they were “of simple nature, aspiring to noble actions.” Their deep responsiveness to eloquent speech made them uniquely suited to receive and transmit the Qur’anic revelation.

The chapter closes by affirming that the choice of Arabic and the Arabs points not to Arab supremacy but to the universal, human nature of the Islamic message.

## CHAPTER 2 - THE IMPACT OF THE QUR'ĀN ON ARABIC

The chapter examines two dimensions of the Qur'an's impact on Arabic: historical and linguistic.



### Section 1: The Historical Impact

The Qur'an served as both a driving force and a protective force for Arabic.

#### 1.1 The Driving Force

The Qur'an propelled Arabic far beyond the Arabian Peninsula into Iraq, Syria, Egypt and North Africa. Crucially, unlike prior Arab migrations which led to cultural assimilation and language loss, the waves of migration at the advent of Islam were different - Muslims retained close



ties to their origin and took their language with them.

Normally migration to a new country slowly erases one's culture. But the fact that the Arabs migrated with the intent to spread the Qur'an maintained their culture.

The Qur'an also influenced non-Arab Muslim languages (Persian, Turkish, Urdu), all of which absorbed a core of Qur'anic Arabic vocabulary necessary for worship.

Critically, a translation is not considered the Qur'an - Imām al-Nawawī and the four madhāhib are unanimous on this - so reciting the Arabic text remains an act of worship, perpetually embedding the language in Muslim life globally.

### 1.2 The Spread of Islam and Arabic

Arabic spread where early Islamic conquests were Arab-led. Where Islam spread through traders (Indonesia, sub-Saharan Africa) or later converts (Moguls, Ottomans), Arabic lagged behind. The notable exception was Persia, where Arabic eventually became the dominant academic and literary language for centuries - even Persian scholars like Avicenna wrote in Arabic - though Persian was later revived.



### 1.3 A Driving Force but Not a Ruling Authority

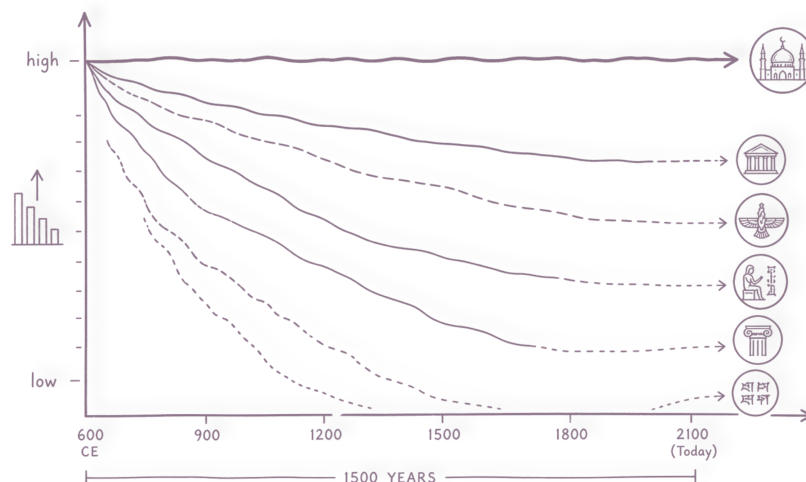
Arabic's spread was never enforced by political decree. Communities freely chose it over languages imposed by Roman, Greek, Persian and Byzantine conquerors. Prof. 'Ā'ishah 'Abd al-Rahmān (Bint al-Shāṭi') confirms this followed the organic laws of sociology - the Qur'an opened hearts, not armies.

### 1.4 The Protective Force

Highlighted emphasis: The Qur'an has been "an impregnable barrier against the spread of local dialects." Without it, Arabic would have fragmented like Latin into mutually unintelligible regional languages. The Qur'an's preservation by divine guarantee [15:9] entails the preservation of its language. As a result, Arabic literature is readable across sixteen or seventeen centuries - an entirely unique phenomenon. Classical Arabic is therefore described as immune to disintegration - calls to replace it with local dialects (by

figures like Saeed Aql and Lewis Awad) are characterised as having ulterior motives aimed at severing the Arab Muslim nation from its heritage.

Arabic will never become a dead language - by virtue of God's guarantee, it remains the living language of millions: "We have made the Qur'an easy to bear in mind: will anyone take heed?" [54:17].



## Section 2: The Linguistic Impact

The Qur'an was the direct cause of the rise of most Arabic and Islamic academic disciplines (al-Suyūfī).

### 2.1 Unifying Accents

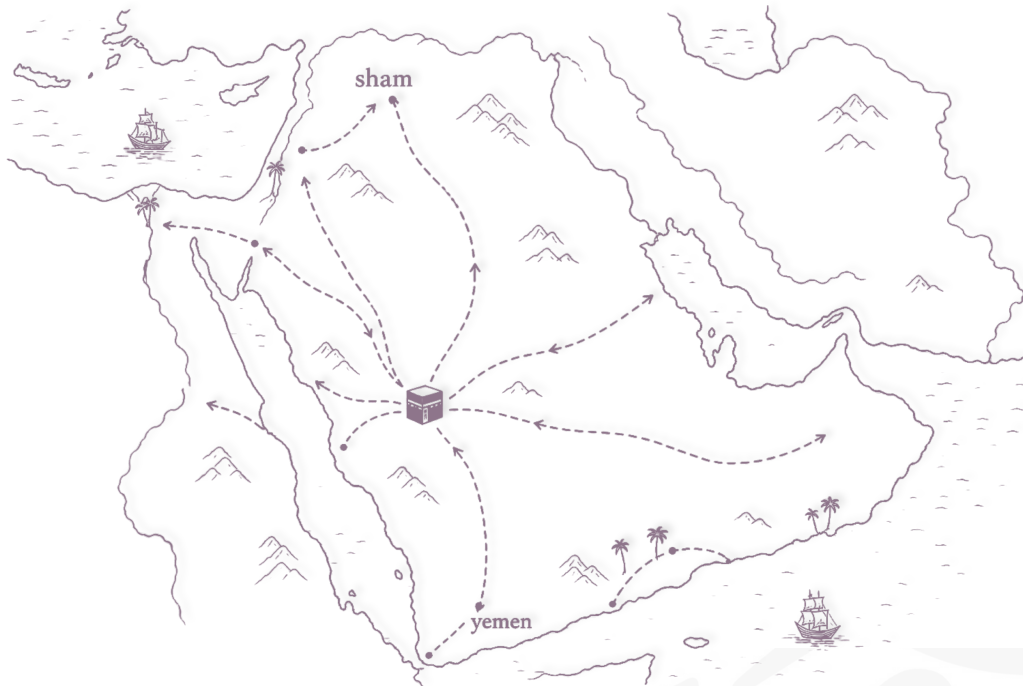
Pre-Islamic Arabs spoke over twenty dialects. The Qur'an, revealed in the Quraysh dialect - described as the most eloquent, benefiting from urbanisation and wide tribal contact - unified these variations into a single standard. The Quraysh dialect was the most widely spoken and had naturally absorbed the best features of other dialects.

### 2.2 The Qur'an's Influence on Arabic Vocabulary

The Qur'an's impact on vocabulary was phenomenal and revolutionary, operating in two ways:

- Words shed old meanings to refer to new Islamic concepts unfamiliar to the pre-Islamic Arabs - terms for prayer, inheritance law, fiqh, governance, etc. Ibn Fāris documents how the entire conceptual world of the Arabs was overturned: "When God revealed Islam, things changed, religions were abrogated, practices stopped."
- Emergence of new meanings: The Qur'an refined, added to, and re-contextualised existing vocabulary - moving it from a pagan frame of reference to one suited to all mentalities in all ages.

Note: The Qur'an became "the main source and the ultimate resort of Arabic Islamic culture" - encompassing Qur'anic and hadith sciences, linguistics, fiqh, literature, philosophy, and more. Islam, in Shaykh al-Khiḍr Husayn's words, "came bringing guidance that included concepts which were unknown to them... it expressed these meanings with words that enriched the language."



## CHAPTER 3 - THE QUR'AN'S IMPACT ON ISLAMIC CULTURE & CIVILISATION

This chapter frames the Qur'an as the foundation of an entire civilisational worldview, not merely a religious or linguistic text.

### The Nature of Language and Culture

The chapter opens by opposing a reductive view of Arabic's role. The Qur'an did not simply add new vocabulary to Arabic - it reshaped an entire civilisation through it.

Language is not just a lexicon but "a system of meaningful symbols that expresses the entire organisation and thought of a civilisation." Crucially, languages do not only differ in words - they differ in their ways of thinking, in the set of meanings they carry. Every culture has its own concepts of life and knowledge, and these are reflected in the nature of its language.

This is a profound point: to study Arabic is not merely to acquire a linguistic skill but to enter a particular way of seeing the world.



## Arabic as the Key to Islamic Civilisation

The study of Arabic gives access to the meaning of Islamic civilisation - a civilisation grounded in Tawhīd (the Oneness of God), with balanced, comprehensive, and positive principles. Unlike Roman and Western civilisation, which were built on imperial hierarchies, Islamic civilisation justified itself through equality - the principle that no Arab has superiority over a non-Arab except through taqwā (piety), as the Prophet declared in his farewell sermon.

## The Distinctiveness of Islamic Civilisation

Drawing on the Algerian thinker Malek Bennabi, the chapter identifies the two most significant civilisations in human history as the Greco-Roman and the Arab-Islamic. The comparison is pointed:

- Roman/Western civilisation: hierarchical, imperialist, dividing humanity into citizens and non-citizens - a pattern the author argues has continued into contemporary Western civilisation
- Islamic civilisation: grounded in Tawhīd, which gave it a special character - the intellectual capacity to engage with and absorb the diverse religious and philosophical traditions of the regions it entered (Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia, India, Central Asia, Egypt)

Belief in God's Oneness is not merely a theological position - it is the lens through which Islamic civilisation understood the universe, life, and humanity, and what enabled it to encounter older civilisations with confidence rather than anxiety.

## The Qur'an as the Source of Islamic Culture

The chapter closes by affirming, with T.S. Eliot, that all cultures have religious bases - and that culture disappears when it loses its religious foundation. In the case of Islamic culture, that foundation is explicitly Qur'anic. The Qur'an is not one source among many; it is the source and final reference point of Islamic culture in all its dimensions.

# Part 2: The Authenticity of the Quranic Text & The Date of its Finalisation

## CHAPTER 4 - THE QUR'ĀN & EARLIER DIVINE BOOKS

This chapter covers three main areas: the definition and nature of the Qur'an, its relationship to earlier scriptures, and its unique names and preservation.

### Section 1: Definition of the Qur'an and How It Differs from the Hadith

#### 1.1 The Name Qur'an

Three etymological positions are presented:

- From Qur' - meaning to **gather or put together** (gathering stories, commandments, prohibitions, promises, warnings, and all surahs and verses)
- From qarā'in - meaning **pieces of information corroborating one another**
- Al-Lihyānī's view (supported by the author): the term is itself a root word simply **indicating what is read**

Imām al-Shāfi'ī's position is also noted: Qur'an is not derived from any root at all - it is a **proper name given directly to God's words revealed to Muhammad ﷺ**.

#### 1.2–1.3 The Qur'an Distinguished from Other Speech

The chapter carefully maps out a hierarchy of speech:

- **God's speech encompasses far more than the Qur'an** (cf. 31:27 - if all the trees were pens, God's words would not be exhausted)
- **The Qur'an is specifically the speech sent down to Muhammad ﷺ, in Arabic, for recitation as worship**
- This excludes: earlier scriptures (Torah, Psalms, Gospel), ḥadīth qudsī, and ordinary Hadith

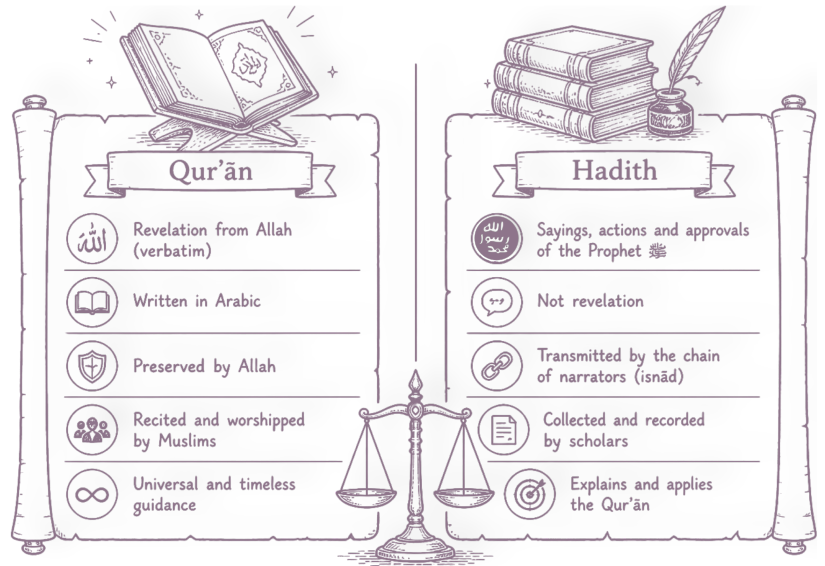
Note: The ḥadīth qudsī is excluded because, while attributed to God in meaning, it was not revealed in wording, is not recited in prayer, is not a challenge to produce its like, and carries no special reward for its recitation. The Qur'an, on the other hand, is revealed in

both word and meaning - it cannot be altered or omitted, and is unique to the Muslim nation as a living source until the Day of Judgement.

### 1.4 Key Distinctions Between Qur'an and Hadith

Two points are emphasised:

- The Qur'an is God's word revealed in wording and meaning; Hadith represents the Prophet's verbal statements
- They must never be mixed up - the Qur'an is a text that admits neither addition nor omission



## Section 2: The Earlier Divine Books

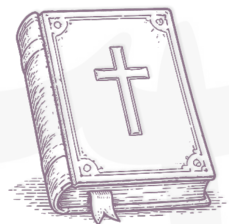
### 2.1 The Old Testament

The Torah (five books of Moses), historical books, hymns, and prophetic books make up the Old Testament. The author is frank about the problems in these texts: they were written long after Moses, contain distortion and internal contradictions, and depict God and the prophets in deeply unworthy ways - God is shown as having a shaped form, Noah as a drunkard, Abraham as willing to trade his wife's honour for material gain, Lot engaging in illicit relations.

The Qur'an's great advantage over the Torah and Gospel is being immune to distortion and corruption - something Islamic thought, culture and civilisation benefits from entirely.

### 2.2 The New Testament

The four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) were written decades after Jesus (as), not by him, and contain significant uncertainties regarding authorship, date, and language. Many Christian historians acknowledge that numerous gospels



circulated and the Church selected only four. The Gospel of John opens with the most serious distortion - attributing divinity to Jesus. The four gospels were not revealed to Prophet Jesus (as) - they are more like a history of Jesus and his life as remembered by his disciples.

### Section 3: Other Names of the Qur'an and Its Preservation

The Qur'an has several names given by God, each reflecting a quality:

- Al-Furqān - the Standard distinguishing truth from falsehood
- Al-Kitāb - The Book, written and preserved
- Al-Tanzīl - The Revelation, sent down from on High
- Al-Dhikr - The Reminder, recalling people to God across all times

Note: The name Dhikr (Reminder) carries special weight - it reminds people of God, of earlier prophets, of what will come. Crucially, God's promise to preserve it (15:9) is a guarantee and an unfulfilling promise from God Almighty.

The Qur'an has remained in its original form through:

- 1 - the Muslim community's unbroken memorisation tradition,
- 2 - the Prophet's Companions and their conscious transmission, and
- 3 - uninterrupted chains of narrators confirmed by scholars. No scribe, translator, or copyist can corrupt it - if any error enters the written text, the memorised oral tradition corrects it.



This places the Qur'an in a categorically different position from all earlier scriptures, which God entrusted to their communities to guard - and which they failed to protect.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Last updated: 30/04/2026

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