Qur'anic Identity Building: A Discourse Analysis of *Asmā' al-Qur'an*

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ABSTRACT: Original Paper

This paper seeks to explain the way in which the Qur'an historically established its identity through its use of *asmā' al-Qur'ān* (*al-qur'ān, al-kitāb, al-furqān,* and *al-dhikr*). In doing so, it combines the analysis of the literary feature and the historical chronology of every single use of *asmā' al-qur'ān* terminologies during its formative period. This analysis requires the use of *al-tartīb al-nuzūl* approach—that of al-Jābirī—integrated with discourse analysis to understand the process of identity building of the Qur'an. According to this study, the Qur'an language was the tool through which the Qur'an distributed its power, both explicitly and implicitly. The implicit mechanism manifests itself as the Qur'an's positional play between the traditional *shi'r* and earlier scripture in order to influence the Quraysh's psychological state. The explicit mechanism is that it clearly declares itself to be the Arabic scripture (*Qur'ānan 'arabiyyah*). *Asmā' al-Qur'ān* plays an important role in both strategies. There would be no better way to gain influence for the Arab community, which valued language and had a strong emotional attachment to it. Even though few believed in it, the identity of the Qur'an had been successfully established through both strategies in its first seven years.

KEYWORDS: *asmā' al-Qur'an*, *tartīb al-nuzūl*, power, Arabic language.

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1. Introduction

Anyone approaching the Qur'an must first answer the question, "What is the Qur'an?" The question concerns the identity of the Qur'an, and the answer is typically the definition. The Qur'an is described as kalāmullah al-munazzal ilā muḥammad biwāṣiṭat jibrīl al-mutaʿabbadu bitilāwatih (the word of God which is revealed to Muhammad through Jibril, whose recitation is regarded as worship). This is the common definition given in books such as al-Nabaʾ al- ʿAẓīm: Naẓrah Jadīdah fi al-Qurʾān al-Karīm by Abdullah Darrāz and Mabāḥith fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān by Mannāʿ Khalīl al-Qaṭṭān. Other definitions are marked by additional phrases such as lafẓ al-ʿarabiy, tawātur, muʿjiz, and so on. Al-Jabiri cites at least five traditional definitions of the Qur'an and criticizes them for describing ideological biases.

What those definitions attempt to explain is the ontology of the Qur'an. There is the alternative way to see the identity of the Qur'an. While those definitions answer the question of what, this alternative way respond to the question of how instead. I will refer it with the term self-identity, i.e. the Qur'an identifies itself. Al-Jābirī (2006, 31) himself has already introduced the same way, somehow he simplified it, by only providing five verses of the Qur'an, (Q. 26:192-196). However, there is a chance to solve this problem. Here I refer to the theory of Asmāʾ al-Qurʾān; list of words that are considered as the names of the Qur'an. Among several theories of Asmāʾ al-Qurʾān, I refer to one of the oldest which are proposed by al-Ṭabarī (1958, 94-96). For him, there are four names of the Qur'an, i.e. al-Qurʾān (Q.12: 3), al-furqān (Q.25: 1), al-kitāb (Q.18:1), and al-dhikr (Q.15: 9). Unlike the traditional elaboration to this theory, this paper will explore the role of Asmāʾ al-Qurʾān in context of how the attempt of the Qur'an to establish its identity in its formative period.

This paper is an effort to describe the identity-building endeavour—self-identity—of the Qur'an through Asmā al-Qurʾān. It is a report of analyzing every single use of Asmā al-Qurʾān terminologies in the Qur'an. This research applies historical approach. Our emphasis is on actual use of the terms of Asmā al-Qurʾān historically within its formative period. This stance implies to the use of tartīb al-nuzūl approach—the one used is the theory of al-Jābirī —to know the relation between Muhammad, socio-cultural circumstances, and the actual use of Asmā al-Qurʾān, integrated with the theory of the order of discourse introduced by Michel Foucault, to understand the process of identity building of the Qur'an. However, considering the limited space, I shall not provide the detailed analysis on

every using of Asmā' al-Qur'ān; all I can write down here is the general conclusion of them. Above all, the central question to discuss here is how was the actual use of Asmā al-Qur'ān as the self-identity of the Qur'an? To answer the question, the elaboration of this article is based on two principles, the axiom of Qur'an as process (Sinai 2010, 407) and the surah as unity (thematic surah).

2. Pre-Qur'anic Context

This chapter will provide a brief overview of the historical setting in which the Qur'an developed its self-identity. The pre-Qur'anic religions and the pre-Qur'anic Muhammad will be the two topics that will be discussed.

The majority of pre-Islamic Arabs held to the belief that stars and other natural phenomena possess metaphysical force. Their tribe names, such as al-Kalb, al-Ṣawr, and Tha'alabah, are totemic. They worshipped idols like Wadd for the moon, Lātt for the sun, and 'Uzz for the flowers, each of which represented their faith in natural force (Ḍa'īf 2002, 1:89).

According to Joseph Henninger, the religion of the Arabic nomads predated that of the urban population. He continued by stating that there were three main aspects of Arab people's early religions: (1) their belief in Allah as the highest and undisputed Lord; (2) their worship of other astral deities, which was a manifestation of His power; and (3) their reverence for ancestors and the Jinn (Henninger 1998, 112-121). Jews and Christians are considered to be the two main religions of urban residents. The propagation of both religions was aided by missionaries and traders on the one hand, and by Byzantium and the Abyssinian imperium on the other (Lapidus 1999, 26). Before Muhammad, Jews and Christians coexisted in Taima', Fadak, Khaybar, Wadi al-Qura, and Yathrib, respectively (Amin 1968, 45).

There were also a few individuals who did not identify themselves as Jew or Christians, or paganism. They were called ḥanīf (Rubin 1998). Ibn Hishām mentions four names: Waraqah ibn Naufal, 'Ubaidillah ibn Jaḥsh, 'Uthmān ibn Khuwairith, and Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufail. Some of Qur'anic verses also mention them with the very same terminology, such as Q.2:135; 3:67; 3:95, 4:125. According to historical writings these people aspired to the unadulterated monotheism of Abraham (Ibn Hishām 2009, 105; Abū Zayd 2000, 63; Rahman 1998, 187). Additionally, there were people who claimed to be prophets, such as al-Aswad in Yaman, Musaylima in Yamāmah, Ṭulayḥa ibn Khuwaylid from Asad tribe, Abū 'Āmir and Sajāḥ (Makin 2010, 172; 2008; 2013).

Regarding the scripture, those faiths can be divided into two groups:

those that have it and those that does not. The first category includes Jews and Christians, whereas the second category includes everyone else. The first category is referred to as ahl al-kitāb, whilst the second is named ummī. The term of ummī is a designation by which ahl al-kitāb called the Arabs because the latter did not have scripture. This fact made the former feel superior to the Arabs, as the latter also felt inferior under the former. Because ahl al-kitāb had scriptures, they believed that they were more learned than the pagan Arabs.

These categories and the exact same terminology are used in the Qur'an as well. For instance, Q. 3:75 explains how ahl al-kitāb felt about Arabs. It claims that some members of the ahl al-kitāb should never have been trusted; even though this is not true of all of them. They did so out of disrespect for the Arabs, claiming that their scriptures allowed them to act haughtily against them (the ummī) (al-Ṭabarī 1958, 5:511). According to Q. 7:157–158, the ahl al-kitāb were familiar with the term "ummī" from their scriptures (Ibn Kathīr 2000, 6:407). Q. 3:75 mentions ummī in plural, ummīyīn, and in the Q. 7:157 Muhammad is referred to as al-nabiyy al-ummī, which literally translates to "the prophet of the ummī people." Here, it is clear that ummī represents the Arabs to whom Muhammad was sent. The same could be inferred from Q. 62:2 and Q. 3:20. The sense of antonym within both terminologies implies that the Arabs were called ummī because they did not have scripture as ahl al-kitāb did (al-Ṭabarī 1958, 6:281; al-Zamakhsharī 1998, 1:539).

According to the verses mentioned above, Muhammad was one of the ummīs, which meant that he did not have access to earlier scripture like the rest of Quraysh. Thus, when were the Quraysh, particularly Muhammad, aware of the Qur'an as Holy Scripture? Had Muhammad recognized that Q.96:1-5, which he received in Ḥira', were the holy scripture since that early revelation event? Whole Muslims may find it very easy to identify the Qur'an as the Holy Scripture since it names itself al-kitāb on its very first page, in Q.2:2. However, that was not necessarily the case for Muhammad. Here, it is important to note that Muhammad was not aware of Q. 96:1–5 when Jibril in Ḥīra revealed those verses. That is due to a few factors. First off, it appears that Q. 96:1–5 did not name themselves. Likewise, none of those early revelation event's historical narratives (Q.96:1–5) labelled it as scripture or as anything else (Ibn Hishām 2009, 111-112; al-Ṭabarī 1976, 2:298-299). That identification appeared long after the event, i.e. (Q. 44:3; 2:185; 97:1) (the first is the 62nd surah in tartīb al-nuzūl and the last two are Medinan surahs). Furthermore, the Qur'an itself supports that claim by stating wamā kunta tadrī ma al-kitāb wala al-imān. Here, we learn that the Qur'an presented itself in a peculiar circumstance. Nobody could have

predicted the emergence of a scripture in their area, not even Muhammad. But as things accelerated quickly, the Arabs started to realize that their history was changing in ways that no one could have predicted.

3. The Qur'an: the Symbol of Power

Islamic tradition generally accepts that the Ḥira event marked the beginning of Muhammad's prophecy. The incident served as a resolution to Muhammad's questions about reality, so that he worshipped God in the religion of Abraham (ḥanīf). He was visited by Jibril, who gave him the command to read and disclosed to him five verses, namely Q.96:1–5. The tradition also mentions how difficult Muhammad found the experience. He had no idea what had transpired. He was aware that the poet, or khin, was typically the one to receive revelation in this manner. Jibril approached him as he was lostly making his way back home and informed him, "Muhammad, I am Jibril, and you are the Prophet." He stated it three times (Ibn Hishām 2009, 111-112; al-Ṭabarī 1976, 2:298-299).

Muhammad's prophecy begins with Q.96:1–5. In this respect, there are two pertinent questions. When the verses were first revealed, did Muhammad and the Arabs recognize that they were a part of what would subsequently be known as the Qur'an? Did Muhammad and the Arabs recognize Muhammad's prophetic status at that time? I answered the first question at the conclusion of the preceding segment, so there. Regarding the second query, on the other hand, we can infer from the preceding sentence that Jibril had informed Muhammad that he was the prophet. There were some other Quraysh who may have been aware of it beforehand. There were some other Quraysh who may have known about it earlier. Khadjah was the first to discover it, and Waraqah ibn Naufal confirmed it through his knowledge of his scripture (Ibn Hishām 2009, 111). Long before it happened, the Monk Baḥīra, whom Muhammad met during his trading journey with Abū Ṭālib, predicted the coming prophet, and he was confident enough that it could be Muhammad (Lings 2014, 53). It implies that, aside from Muhammad, the only person who could potentially know Muhammad's prophecy is ahl al-kitāb. That is not always the case for Arabs, the ummī community.

We can conclude that Muhammad lacked authority prior to the revelation of the Qur'an. Given that he had it at the end of his life, it implies that Muhammad had already passed the vast attempt to create such authority. Such authority was established between two communities: the ummī and the ahl al-kitāb. Meccans experienced something strange soon after the news of

the Ḥīra' event spread. First and foremost, Quraysh assumed that what Muhammad was saying was no different from what they had heard from other figures such as Quss, Umayyah, Waraqah, and so on. They thought the Meccans would finally return to their traditional faith, regardless. They, however, misjudged Muhammad. The Qur'an and Muhammad were completely different because they had a far greater impact than anyone could have predicted. It resembled traditional poem (al-shi'r al-jāhilī) but was apparently different. It had the similar mechanism of revelation as traditional al-shi'r; however, it proclaimed higher authority. It came from the master of 'arsh. Muhammad received it from rasūl karīm instead of the jinn.

The Qur'an brought Muhammad instant local fame. If Quraysh initially respected him as something reflected by the predicate of al-amīn, they were perplexed as to how to treat him afterwards. Al-Walīd ibn Mughīra, a powerful Quraysh figure, was unsure how to address Muhammad with his words (Ibn Hishām 2009, 123-124). Since he was revealed beautiful words, known as al-shi'r in their tradition, Muhammad has been known as the poet. However, because the message contained within his words were strange and alien, he was labelled a deranged person. We can see here that the existence of the Qur'an had put Muhammad in a specific situation. As the attention and popularity of Muhammad grew gradually and intensively, he eventually had enormous influence in its society. I would refer this situation as the power. The Qur'an is, therefore, the symbol of power for Muhammad.

What I mean by the Qur'an serving as a symbol of power for Muhammad is that if he had spoken without the Qur'an, he would have been ignored. He would have been regarded as the common Monk or Monotheism claimant in their society. He spoke alongside the Qur'an in some way, and it did have an effect on something more. He had earned a lot of attention. With the Qur'an, Muhammad rose to prominence. He controlled the Arabs' discourse and knowledge of theology, prophecy, and scripture with the Qur'an in the same way that a man controls a horse. The initial reaction could be wild, tough, and unpredictable. However, history revealed that in only 23 years, the power of Muhammad was recognized not only by the Quraysh of Mecca, but also by the Medinan's and the entire population of the Arabian Peninsula.

The symbolic relationship is arbitrary and is based on convention (Chandler 2007, 39). The Qur'an was certainly new at the time, and it was attempting to gain recognition for its existence and identity. If that were the case, how could the Quraysh community's convention that the Qur'an was a symbol of Muhammad's power have been possible, given that the Qur'an

itself was not strong enough? The convention did not happen by chance; it did not emerge from thin air. It was shaped by the Arabs' traditional convention on al-shi'r and previous scripture. Before the Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad, the poet was regarded as the intellectual in Arab culture. The Arabs also considered ahl al-kitāb to be superior in terms of the knowledge they gained from their scripture. Both of these are Arab conventions. In fact, when the Qur'an was first promoting itself and attempting to gain identity recognition prior to al-shi'r al-jāhilī, their traditional convention surrounding al-shi'r al-jāhilī cascaded to the Qur'an. Afterward, when the Qur'an was placing itself among the family of scriptures, the second convention also cascaded to the Qur'an. It was from both conventions the symbolic relation between the Qur'an and the power of Muhammad had emerged.

4. Language as the Tool of Power

We have already discussed how the Qur'an was a symbol of Muhammad's power. In this case, I would argue that this power used language as a tool to control the discourse. If anyone in the Arab peninsula desired a radical change in the seventh century, language was a very effective tool. The position of language within Arab culture has allowed the Qur'an to impose a specific psychological effect on their people. According to Hitti (2014, 112), no people in the world have a greater appreciation for language and derive more emotional influences from it than Arabs. The Arabs' eagerly controllable psychological state becomes the portal through which the Qur'an enters their rational and psychological spaces. When the Qur'an used language to control the Arabs, it effectively distributed its power to them.

The first time the Qur'an introduced itself, it used the term of al-dhikr (Q. 81:27). The term al-dhikr has two etymological meanings: dhikr bi al-lisān and dhikr bi al-qalb. According to Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī (n.d., 179), this word refers to a condition in which humans are capable of keeping something they know—similar to the meaning of al-ḥifẓ—or presenting something abstractly in heart (qalb) or verbally (qawl). Ibn Manẓūr (n.d., 1507) agrees, explaining that this word meant to recall something (al-ḥifẓ li shai' tadhkuruhu) or to mention/recite something verbally (al-shai' yajrī 'ala al-lisān). In this context, the proper meaning of these two basic meanings appears to be the second, verbal recitation (dhikr bi al-lisān). This meaning is chosen because it was the first identification of the Qur'an and occurred in the very early period of Mecca. In other words, the Qur'an identified itself as something familiar with a cultural element of the Quraysh people, who

had a strong connection to the poem (al-shi'r al-jāhilī). Because at that time the most common form of poetry was verbal, the Qur'an first identified itself as something verbal, al-dhikr, in order to tempt Quraysh to accept its existence. However, the fact that it did not directly identify itself as al-shi'r indicates that, while it was included within the cultural context of Quraysh, it was not the shi'r.

In Q. 81, the Qur'an argued that what Muhammad received through rasūl karīm from the master of 'arsh was Divine revelation. The term rasūl in the nineteenth verse deserves closer examination. This word indicates the mechanism of the revelation of al-dhikr. According to Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, the Arabs believed that a supernatural being, Jinn, was capable of bridging the metaphysical and empiric worlds. These Jinn can listen to the secret message from the sky to reveal it to the poet. This kind of belief provides the cultural context for the Quraysh people to accept the Qur'an. "It is not the existence of the Qur'an," Abū Zayd says, "that they deny rather than the content of it." The relationship between the secret message, the jinn, and the poet explains how the Quraysh perceive the relationship between the Qur'an, rasūl karīm, and Muhammad. That explains why they are tempted to classify this revelation, al-dhikr, as the poem, even though they appear uncertain, as demonstrated by the story of al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīra mentioned above (Abū Zayd 2000, 32-41).

While the Qur'an's introduction of itself as something resembling traditional al-shi'r in terms of revelation mechanism is genius, given the cultural state of the pagan people who found itself tightly bound to traditional al-shi'r, the Qur'an also imposed its uniqueness. The traditional revelation mechanism was appropriated, but not without modification. Qur'anic self-identity in the surahs al-Takwīr (Q.81), al-Raḥmān (Q.55), and al-Burūj (Q.85), evidence that Muhammad's revelation is a new category distinct from al-shi'r.

The Qur'an does not call itself al-qur'ān for the first time; instead, it employs a rather ambiguous term, al-dhikr. In this early period, surah al-Takwīr also makes no mention of the Qur'an coming from God/Allah. This sūra said that it is the word of rasūl karīm, whose position was special before dhī al-'arsh. In other words, the Qur'an does not immediately declare that it is from God, but rather from a very close intermediary to God (rasūlin karīm, dhī quwwatin 'inda dhi al-'arsh makīn). The Qur'an firstly called itself al-qur'ān in sūra al-Raḥmān. Not only called itself al-Qur'an, this surah also proclaims that it is God himself, the al-Raḥmān, who teaches the Qur'an to Muhammad. Thus, the Qur'an—earlier called al-dhikr and now al-qur'ān—despite resembling the traditional shi'r in this regard, is not shi'r. The use of

the distinct name in this context, al-qur'ān, is to proclaim its uniqueness. Furthermore, to emphasize this unique quality, the Qur'an deconstructs and modifies some terminologies introduced with the Qur'an. From our perspective, this explains why the Qur'an is in the process of developing new discourse for Arabs who have never read the Holy Scripture. The Qur'an now appears as an authentic discourse, a revelation that dazzles Quraysh with its peculiarities. We can see how the Qur'an introduced its novelty here.

The Qur'an eventually broke down that first category after introducing itself with such novelty. It destroyed the authority of traditional al-shi'r from its very foundational aspect, namely the origin. It has been said earlier that Jinn was the source of a particular kind of shi'r for the Arab pagan people. In light of this, al-Raḥmān addressed jinn and human an equal manner. Anybody approaching al-Raḥmān will see a sentence repeated even for 31 times, fabi ayyi ālā'i rabbikumā tukaẓẓibān. In my opinion, the depiction of jinn here has a clear mission: to challenge Arabs' traditional beliefs about al-shi'r. As the Arabs believe that certain people with certain qualities are capable of communicating with jinn who receive stolen secret messages from the sky, al-Raḥmān radically undermines this belief, placing jinn as much as human beings as communicants. Arabs who are very close to al-shi'r al-jāhilī should immediately detect strange things in this discourse.

Furthermore, sūra al-Jinn (Q.72) conveys that Jinn no longer had the ability to sit on the sky and listen to the revelation of the sky. Al-Jinn begins by commanding Muhammad to inform the Arabs that the revelation revealed something to him (qul ūḥiya ilayya). It is said that a community of jinn heard the Qur'an and were astounded when they realized it contained the truth. Sūra al-Jinn is more radical than al-Raḥmān in that it clearly violated Arabs' traditional belief in al-shi'r al-jāhilī. The sixth to tenth verses clearly depict the Arab's belief with regards to jinn in a negative tone. According to the ninth verse, jinn used to be able to reach a location in the sky where they could steal the secret message, but that has changed since Muhammad's prophecy. The revelation of Muhammad deconstructs the sacredness of al-shi'r al-jāhilī and even commands him to inform the Quraysh of the decline of jinn's capability (See al-Ṭabarī 1958, 23:310; al-Jābirī 2008, 1:234).

When the Meccan people began to recognize the existence of the Qur'an, they were tempted to compare it to the scriptures of ahl al-kitāb. The Quraysh were shocked with the monotheism teaching of the Qur'an and said that such teaching was absent even within the earlier religions, Jews and Christianity (Q. 38:7), saying mā sami'nā bihāzā fī al-millah al-ākhirah in hāzā illā ikhtilāq. They, therefore, questioned the validity of the Qur'an.

Interestingly, they questioned it in the manner of a comparison. Consequently, the Qur'an then dealt with the second category, ahl al-kitāb; it was the time when the Qur'an for the first time identified itself as al-kitāb, the scripture, in Ṣād (Q.38), al-A'rāf (Q.7). The Qur'an answered them, introducing itself as al-kitāb in Q.38:29 for the first time, an equal scripture to that of Judaism and Christianity. Here we understand the motive of Biblical material within the Qur'an as well as Qur'anic self-identity using the term al-kitāb. They are not to have a dialog with ahl al-kitāb but rather Meccan Quraysh, and the use of Biblical material and such self-identity are to strengthen the authority of the Qur'an; the Arabs feel inferior under ahl al-kitāb due to their scripture, and therefore, could affect the effectivity of monotheism proclamation.

Up to this point, we can see an interestingly gradual process of the Qur'an's introduction of itself using asmā' al-qur'ān. From al-'Alaq (Q.96) to al-Qamar, the Qur'an focused more on positioning itself before al-shi'r al-jāhilī, an important cultural element of the Arab pagan people. Following that, from Ṣād until al-Aḥqāf (Q.46), it focused more on placing itself before the earlier scriptures, the ahl al-kitāb scriptures. The intensity of Qur'anic self-identity then shifted to a focus on itself. From that point on, the Qur'an began to introduce itself, i.e., its nature, character, attributes, and functions, with little reference to al-shi'r al-jāhilī or previous scriptures. It declared its nature as a revelation to Muhammad (Q. 40:2; 45:2; 46:2; 76:23; 32:2), with some characteristics such as ḥaqq, ḥakīm, mubīn, hudā, and so on (Q. 31:2; 39:1; 42:17; 16:64 & 89; 14:1; 2:2 & 185).

Ṣād (Q. 38:8) presents an intriguing case. In this verse, the Qur'an for the first time uses a composition in which the Quraish is placed as the subject when using asmā' al-qur'ān terminologies (it says a'unzila 'alaihi al-dhikr min bayninā). Following that, it occurred again in al-Furqān (Q. 25:34) (wa qāla alladhīna kafarū law lā nuzzila 'alaihi al-Qur'ān jumlatan wāḥidatan). In other words, these compositions convey the Quraish's reaction to the Qur'an. The interesting point here is that the Quraysh's identification of the Qur'an uses al-dhikr first and then al-qur'ān second, just as the Qur'an identified itself for the first and second time in the Qur'an (Q. 81:27 & 55:2). When the Qur'an mentions Quraysh identifying itself in the same way it identified itself, it is natural to conclude that the Qur'anic self-identification project has already achieved some success. To begin, the Quraysh identify it as al-dhikr, which means that they acknowledge Muhammad's revelation from Allah/al-Raḥmān through rūḥ al-amīn is a verbal recitation, similar to al-shi'r al-jāhilī. Furthermore, the Qur'an reports that Quraysh identified itself as al-qur'ān, implying that they already had a new knowledge of the existence of something strange—it is similar to al-shi'r al-jāhilī, but

somehow proclaims difference, that verbal recitation (al-dhikr) is not al-shi'r, but al-qur'ān. It means that the quest for self-identity has already introduced a new knowledge to the Arabian Peninsula; Arabs have acknowledged its existence even if they do not fully understand it.

In the surah Saba' (Q. 34:31), the Qur'an uses the same linguistic style as Q.38:8 & 25:34, placing Quraysh as subject; wa qāla alldhīna kafarū lan nu'mina bihādhā al-Qur'āna walā billadhī bayna yadayhi. The verse refers to Quraysh's challenge, and there is an indication that Quraysh already recognized the existence of the Qur'an, which is no longer related to al-shi'r al-jāhilī, but rather to earlier scripture. Here, we can see that the Quraysh had already elevated the Qur'an to the position of ahl al-kitāb, to which they felt inferior and envious. In other words, the Qur'an was already successful in establishing a new discourse/knowledge in the Arabian Peninsula centered on Holy Scripture. The Arabs, who only had al-shi'r al-jāhilī in their history instead of a sacred scripture like ahl al-kitāb, are now acknowledging the existence of a new holy scripture around them, even if they still do not have faith in it. Within tartīb al-nuzūl framework, the surah Saba' was revealed in the 57th, in the fourth phase of Meccan where Muhammad was facing the coming tribes into Mecca for pilgrimage. The verse was revealed prior to the Quraysh socioeconomic boycott in the seventh year of Muhammad's prophecy. As a result, we can conclude that in the seventh year of Muhammad's prophecy, a new era of history based on Holy Scripture begins in the Arabian Peninsula.

There were two strategies used by the Qur'an while it introduced its identity in the seventh century. The first is authorship. It is of the most important strategy in the discourse of Qur'anic identity. Within the surahs al-Takwīr and al-Raḥmān, the Qur'an clearly identified itself as relating to dhī al-'arsh on one hand and the al-raḥmān on the other hand. Both terminologies are about God. Al-Takwīr did not clearly stated that the qawl that was revealed to Muhammad was from the master of the 'arsh, instead, it is the words of rasūl karīm whose position is extraordinary by the side of dhī al-'arsh. Unlike al-Takwīr, al-Raḥmān did it clear enough, that it was the God who taught Muhammad the Qur'an. It means that the qawl brought by rasūl amīn was not from himself, but rather the God who taught Muhammad. Not only is this authenticity proclamation the main point of division between the Qur'an and traditional al-shi'r, but also it raised up the position of the Qur'an because its origin were from God, rather than the Jinn as the traditional al-shi'r used to recognize it.

Authorship was the strategy by which the Qur'an continuously and consistently conducted. I argued before that the Qur'an gradually faced

ummī with traditional al-shi'r and then ahl al-kitāb with the scriptures to introduce its existence as well as identity. Here I say that authorship was conducted all over that period. After al-Takwīr, al-Raḥmān, and al-Burūj, the Qur'an successively utilized the strategy of authorship in Ṣād, al-A'rāf, Yāsīn (Q.36), al-Furqān, Fāṭir (Q.35), Ṭahā (Q.20), and so forth for Meccan period, and al-Baqarah, al-Nisā' (Q.4), al-Ḥashr (Q.59), and so forth for Medinan period. The key terminologies of this strategy were anzala, nazzala, and awḥā whose subject were God.

The continuous and consistent emphasizing on authorship had the role to claim the superiority of the Qur'an upon traditional al-shi'r and to place itself equal to previous scripture, which the Arabs at that time believed to be the revelation of God as well. A careful look at these phenomena will reveal that this was the implementation of the other limitation strategy, namely commentary. Within this strategy, one Qur'anic verse depicts, explains and interprets the other verses. In the chronological approach that I employ, the verses revealed later continuously described the first discourse of author in al-Takwīr and al-Raḥmān.

It is hardly new in conventional 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān and tafsīr literature. There is a principle namely al-Qur'ān yufassiru ba'ḍuhū ba'ḍa that is also referred as tafsīr al-āyah bi al-āyah. In 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān, it deals with the method by which the Qur'an deliver its message. Sometimes it says something concisely (ijāz), and, on the other hand, it says something else at length, sometimes globally (ijmāl), and the other times in detail (tabyīn). Those, which are stated in general shape in a particular place, will be conducted at length in the other place. Therefore, compiling verses within a unity of a theme would necessarily give a comprehensive understanding (al-Dhahabī 2000, 1:31).

However, the commentary which is performed by the Qur'an in order to create a novel discourse on the existence of a new scripture in Arabs i.e. the Qur'an, establish as well as sustain its identity, has a particular. The role of tafsīr in term of explaining or giving the more definitive elaboration on particular thing only happens in case of al-Takwīr and al-Raḥmān; the former does not clearly state that the Qur'an came from Allāh, while the later explicitly says it is taught by the al-Raḥmān i.e. the God. Other than that, the commentary on this authorship does not appear to be the confirmer or the more detail information on this rather than to emphasize its early notion. This commentary discursively is the effort to sustain the discourse of authorship.

While emphasizing that it, too, was a scripture, the Qur'an employed some unique language formulations, namely aḥruf al-muqaṭṭa'a. During the

third phase of the Meccan surahs, when Muhammad was openly confronting paganism, the Quraysh increased their resistance. Many weak people, whether in secret or in public, are said to have converted to Islam while Muhammad was preaching Islam, but not the man of note in Quraysh. They denounced and censured him as they walked past Muhammad's forum, saying, "How dare this grandson of Abd al-Muallib argue that he received revelation from the sky?" The condemnation remained verbal until Muhammad confronted their gods openly and said, "Woe to the worshippers of idols, and may they die in an infidel state." Since then, the intimidation has turned physical (al-Jābiri 2008, 1:200).

The surahs revealed in this phase, those which revealed in 47th in revelation order successively to the 53rd, al-Shu'arā (Q.26), al-Naml (Q.27), al-Qaṣaṣ (Q.28), Yūnus (Q.10), Hūd (Q.11), Yūsuf (Q.12), and al-Ḥijr (Q.15), are opened by aḥruf al-muqaṭṭa'a (ṭāsīn, ṭāsīnmim, and alif lām rā) followed by Qur'anic self-identity. Al-Shu'arā, al-Qaṣaṣ and Yūsuf are opened by tilka āyāt al-kitāb al-mubīn, while al-Naml consists of al-Qur'ān as the addition word; tilka āyāt al-Qur'ān wa kitābin mubīn, and al-Ḥijr places the words in a reversed-order; tilka āyāt al-kitāb wa Qur'ānin mubīn. Yūnus is opened with tilka āyāt al-kitāb al-ḥakīm, while Hūd with kitābun uḥkimat āyātuhu thumma fuṣilat min ladun ḥakīmin khabīr. The phenomenon occurred again when Muhammad, his followers, and Banū Hāshim were subjected to an economic and social boycott. The surahs revealed in this period, Ghāfir (Q.40), Fuṣilat (Q.41), al-Shūra (Q.42), al-Zukhruf (Q.43), al-Dukhān (Q.44), al-Jāthiyah (Q.45), and al-Aḥqāf (Q.46) were consistently opened with ḥamīm. Here we see the consistent pattern of the Qur'an using Qur'anic self-identity following aḥruf al-muqaṭṭa'a in fourteen surahs. However, that are not all. There are only three surahs out of the total 29 which are opened with aḥruf al-muqaṭṭa'ah, which are not directly followed by Qur'anic self-identity i.e. Maryam (Q.19), al-Ankabūt (Q.29), and al-Rūm (Q.30).

We can find an extensive analysis on aḥruf al-muqaṭṭa'ah within the book of Bint al-Shāṭi' i.e. I'jāz al-Bayāni lil-Qur'ān wa Masā'il Ibn Azraq. She evaluates previous experts' theories and concludes that surahs with aḥruf al-muqaṭṭa'a were revealed during a period when Muhammad and his followers were being intimidated by Quraysh. The intimidation came up for him both personally and in relation to the Qur'an. They labeled Muhammad as insane, a poet, or a shaman. In response to such intimidation, surahs with aḥruf al-muqaṭṭa'a were revealed. It contained an argument on the existence of the Qur'an that refuted those accusations (Bint al-Shi' 1999, 179-180). I agree with Bint al-Shi' that the intensity of surahs with aḥruf al-muqaṭṭa'a is found within surahs revealed in two very difficult conditions, namely open

confrontation with paganism (al-Shuʿarāʾ [26] up to al-Ḥijr [15]) and social boycott (Ghāfir up to al-Aḥqāf).

Faisol Fatawi expands on Bint Shti's conclusion. He claims that there was a concept of sajʾ al-kuhhān in Arab tradition. It was a set of words that no one could understand except the poet who wrote it. This does not, however, imply that the composition was meaningless in the communication. The structure worked pragmatically rather than semantically. It entered the Arabs' psychological state rather than their cognitive state. Sajʾ al-kuhhān did not convey meaning; instead, it conveyed emotion. We can see the historical roots of aḥruf al-muqaṭṭaʿa here. Aḥruf al-muqaṭṭaʿa, like Sajʾ al-kuhhān, urged the Arabs to feel something in their hearts and push them to accept the message (Fatawi 2009, 129), which in this case is the Qur'anic self-identity. In fact, the very existence of aḥruf al-muqaṭṭaʿa silently spread the psychological effect on Arabs, i.e. the first generation of the Qur'an's audience. Because the Qur'an used the commonly recognized mechanism of revelation as traditional al-shi'r, the Qur'an also influenced the psychological state of the Arabs through the strong composition of words, from which the Arabs could do nothing but be amazed at the Qur'an's strength.

Another strategy is that the Qur'an distributes its power through language in an explicit way. Here I refer to the Qur'anic proclamation that it is an Arabic revelation (qur'ān ʿarabīy). The Qur'an states it several times (Q. 20:113; 26:195; 12:2; 39:28; 41:3; 42:7; 43:3; 46:12). Al-Ṭabarī (1958, 13:6; 17:643; 20:196; 20:469) and al-Zamakhsharī (1998, 4:415; 5:366; 5:394) provide hermeneutical nuance in their interpretation of these verses that the Qur'an uses the Arabic language because it is revealed to the Arabs people by which they can understand the meaning of it. Some others emphasize it as the identity of the Qur'an. Al-Zamakhsharī provides two theories; one regards the whole words of the Qur'an as Arabic, and the other says that several words are not necessarily Arabic.

The question becomes more complicated in the context of Qur'anic self-identity discourse. It is certain that the Quraysh recognized the Qur'an as Arabic the moment they heard it. Why would it then emphasize its Arabicness (qur'ānan ʿarabiyyan)? If it is only for hermeneutical purposes, that it is so for them to understand the Qur'an, emphasizing its Arabicness is pointless. It demonstrates, in my opinion, that the Qur'an made every effort to proclaim its identity through language. The Qur'an claims to be scripture, despite the fact that it is written in Arabic, a reference to the Arabs' lack of scriptural experience prior to Muhammad. Furthermore, because Arabs value language, it fully utilized the potential psychological effect of

language. What Hitti says appears to support our contention that no people on the planet have a greater appreciation for language and derive more emotional influence from it than Arabs (Hitti 2014, 112). To build its identity, the Qur'an distributed its power through language.

5. Conclusion

The article points to three conclusions. The first is that Muhammad was one of the Quraysh people. As a result, he was an ummī who had no experience with the scripture. For that matter, the Qur'an for him in the first place was as strange as it was for the other Quraysh. Muhammad did not notice that Q.96:1-5 is the Qur'an during its revelation event at Ḥira', not until the Qur'an itself told him so. The second says that Muhammad had a good reputation in his society, as referred to by the term al-Amīn. He had also been a ḥākim when the Kaʿbah was renovated. However, the Qur'an made him the prophet. Consequently, without the Qur'an, Muhammad was just an honored Quraysh. With the Qur'an in his hand, he had something more, referred to here as power. The Qur'an was then the symbol of the power of Muhammad. The third concerns language. The Qur'an utilized language as the mechanism to spread its power. It was in two ways: implicit and explicit. The implicit strategy was to give a psychological effect to the Arabs in a silent mode through the sequential use of asmā' al-qur'ān, while the explicit way was to declare and emphasize that the Qur'an was the scripture that used the Arabic language. Using language as the mechanism of power was the genius strategy of the Qur'an to establish its identity.

Acknowledgements

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