

The Quran and its Message

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Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN THE QURAN - A BASELESS ASSERTION

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Some critics of the Quran assert that there are grammatical errors in the Quran. As we will note, this is a baseless assertion.

Grammatical Classical Arabic, **as a literary academic genre**, was a late development by the grammarians of the second century AH/8th century CE (over 100 years after the death of the Prophet). The rules of grammar et al were themselves largely based on the Quranic Arabic as the primary language of the Arabs par excellence. Other later sources were also used.

Therefore, to assert grammatical errors in the Quran when what we know today of the classical language has been formulated largely from the Quran is quite simply a fantastic, baseless claim.

BRIEF HISTORY

Albeit much of the grammar in the Quran is retained today in modern Arabic speech, there is vocabulary in the Quran which has now become archaic and obsolete in general parlance.

Comprehensive discussions with regards classical Arabic and the language of the Quran have been retained in classical lexicons. However, it is useful to remember that the earliest grammarians were not necessarily native to where the Quran was initially revealed (Hijaz, Arabia).

The earliest grammarian schools were founded in locales such as Basra and Kufa (Modern day Iraq) where the natives were not Arabs from the Hijaz of the Quraish tribes. There often existed disagreements amongst the early grammarian schools. However much of the discussions have been captured which provide a richer understanding of how the classical Arabs understood the classical Arabic vocabulary.

Please see Kitab al-ayn by Khalil al-Farhidi which is acclaimed to be the first complete dictionary of the Arabic language in the [Study Tools Section](#).

JAHALIYYA POETRY

There is much made of the existence of Jahliyya Poetry (poetry preceding Islam (period of ignorance)) as a possible contemporaneous source of understanding the language of the Quran.

The purpose is not to deny this but to understand the context. There is no Jahaliyya Arabic poetry which has been known to survive from the Quraish tribe of Prophet Muhammad ^(pbuh) **in written form**. We have simply no extant sources in literature form.

What is known is the attribution of poetry to early poets such as Imru'al-Qais, Tarafa, Zuhayr Abi Sulma, Antarah ibn Shaddad al-Absi, Amr ibn Kulthum, Labid, Al-Harith etc which have been orally narrated and passed on through generations. Some of these early poems were collected in the 8th century CE as in the 'Mu'allaqat' (hung poems) by Ar-Rawiya. The fact that Ar-Rawiya collected these odes is further based on elucidations by later grammarians such as 'Ahmad al-Nahhas (died 949CE). (Over 300 years after the death of the Prophet).

Therefore the actual period of the extant sources of the Jahaliyya poetry approximately correspond to a similar period to when grammarians were fiercely debating the Arabic language, at times citing poetry to make their claims. Both sources were taking canon at approximately the same period and it is no secret within scholarship that at times Jahaliyya poetry was being forged.

The reader will no doubt appreciate that there is a huge difference between a later extant body of work claiming to be derived from an earlier source and actually having that earlier source to analyze. Whether these poems have been faithfully transmitted orally is a matter of **faith** not **evidence**.

"Here it suffices to remark that Arabia has not yielded so far any ancient inscriptions in verses, that no old codices or papyri from the pre-Islamic period have come down to us, and that the oldest book in Arabic literature, in the usual sense of the term, is the Koran' Yet by the end of the eight century men were beginning to collect and edit, of course in manuscript, the 'works' of individual poets believed to have lived before Islam" [1]

Therefore, to assert grammatical errors in the Quran is untenable. There is no other contemporaneous standard to the revelation that we know of from which the Quran could possibly deviate. The Quran simply spoke in the dialect of the Quraish tribe with all their peculiarities (if any) and standards of language. The only **real** standard of comparison would be another writing, form of literature, grammar rules from the Quraish tribe contemporaneous with the Quran. Of this, we have **none**. We simply have nothing directly from the Quraishi tribe to compare it against to source mistakes in language.

Therefore, the best and primary source to understand the Quran's usage of its language is the Quran itself. This is the approach any great 'Muffasir' (Quranic exegetic) has taken to understand the Quran. Other sources of analysis including studies through detailed lexicons remain a secondary source of analysis.

It would be equally erroneous to claim that the Quran contained linguistic flaws when the ancient text of a particular dialect of people is compared against modern standard Arabic or any regional Arabic dialects today. The Quran simply has no comparison to be compared against.

Many languages today provide exceptions to their standard grammatical usages. Today's classical grammar '**rules**' can be at variance with the Quran on which it has heavily relied on as a source, but

to suggest the Quran is at variance with the grammar known to us today is **illogical** and **unwarranted**.

FINAL THOUGHTS

To look for, or to allege grammatical errors in the Quran is not only a futile endeavour, it has no basis.

The Quran was not revealed to a people to teach them Arabic, but merely to communicate God's messages in the dialect of the people which they understood best with all their linguistic peculiarities (if any).

014:004

"And We did not send any messenger **but with the language of his people**, so that he might explain to them clearly; then God makes whom He pleases err and He guides whom He pleases and He is the Mighty, the Wise"

012:002

"Indeed, we have revealed this as an Arabic Quran so that you may understand"

Please see a related article: [Is Arabic a Holy or Superior Language?](#)

REFERENCES

[1] ARBERRY. A J, The Seven Odes, R.&R. Clark, Ltd, Edinburgh, First Published 1957, Prologue: The Golden Poems, Page 14

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